

RAIN, RAIN, GO TO
SPAIN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE PEAL OF BELLS
THE BLUE LION
THE MONEY-BOX
THE ORANGE TREE
THE LITTLE ANGEL
THE PLEASURES OF IGNORANCE
THE GOLDFISH
THE GREEN MAN
IT'S A FINE WORLD

RAIN, RAIN, GO TO SPAIN

BY
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("Y.Y.")



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TO
KATHLEEN HILTON YOUNG

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I. The Weather: An Explanation ∞

THERE has been widespread comment on the week-end weather since the beginning of the year. I do not keep a diary, and so I cannot check the figures bearing on the subject that have been published in the Press ; but my memory supports the statement in a newspaper that we had already had eighteen wet week-ends in London between the beginning of January, and the end of May, and that 1931 had during that period given us only four week-ends that were not spoiled by wet weather. The human mind, that restless inquirer into the causes of things, cannot contemplate such facts as these without seeking for an explanation. But the usual explanations of bad weather are, it must be admitted, extremely unsatisfying. We hear of depressions in Iceland, without knowing what causes the depressions in Iceland. I doubt, however, whether a depression in Iceland has anything more to do with producing the weather in England than Tuesday has to do with producing Wednesday. The one is followed by the other, but the cause lies farther back than either. During the War, if it rained, we put the blame on the guns in France. But men with long memories remembered torrential rains that

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had fallen in peace-time, and the theory of the malice of gun-fire was accepted only by the credulous. The ordinary man, indeed, has not the faintest notion what produces bad weather, and the men of science have not hitherto been of much assistance to him in forming an opinion. This, it seems to me, is because science has a prejudice in favour of materialistic explanations and leaves a great mass of important facts outside the scope of its inquiries. Our superstitious ancestors knew better, and, at the end of another thousand years, we may expect the men of science to make the exciting discovery that what the superstitious have always known by instinct is true. One of the things they will discover, it seems likely, is that Nature is intelligent, and that it is the intelligence of Nature that bombards us with wetness in such a season as the present. Nature, I (not being a man of science) hold, has deliberately become wet in self-defence. She is defending herself as vigorously as she can against the ravages of week-ending man, who for the first time in history, threatens to rob her of all her flowers.

Man to-day—this can be seen on any fine Sunday—has become a plague and a pestilence. No cloud of locusts ever descended more devastatingly on a countryside than the horde of human beings that takes flight from the towns in motor-cars and on bicycles at the first glimpse of week-end sunshine. I drove many miles

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along country roads and lanes on one of the few bright Sundays of the present spring, and never have I seen such a fury of destruction on the part of men, women, and children among the flowers. Some of them had come with trowels and were uprooting plants with feverish frenzy. Others were stripping the borders of the roads and, disregarding the 'Trespassers prosecuted' notices, the woods of every flower in sight. Bluebells were torn from their shady retreats almost before they had blossomed. Enough cowslips were heaped into the car of a single family to decorate every room in a West End hotel. Primrose and violet, campion and star of Bethlehem—a stranger to the earth might reasonably have concluded that human beings hated flowers, so great was the havoc they wrought among them. It was as if the crowd in an art-gallery were suddenly to go mad and slash the pictures out of their frames, leaving ruin where once there was beauty. Statesmen, perhaps, ought to have foreseen this when the motor-car was first invented. They ought to have realized that human beings are not yet sufficiently civilized to be trusted with motor-cars and to have suppressed the new invention as a danger to society. Men, women, and children, it may be replied, plucked flowers long before the days of the motor-car; and there is no denying this. But it was flower-picking with a difference. In those days people

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did not as a rule take carts with them upon which to heap the spoils of the countryside. They were content with a handful of blossoms of which Nature was then lavish far beyond human needs. Apart from this, the towns were not then loosed on the countryside in the wholesale fashion of the present day. The man who wandered into the country on foot or on a bicycle, was generally half a countryman at heart ; and he earned his flowers with the sweat of his brow. The motor-car, however, has brought into existence a new race of human beings, who go into the country, not because they love the country, but because they love their cars. Not that all motorists, or even the majority, are of this kind. But there is a considerable minority of motorists who, I believe, would never dream of spending an afternoon in the country but for the pleasure of covering miles of road in a car. This one may infer from the fact that you will find them throwing sandwich papers and chocolate wrappings under a bush in which a nightingale is singing, and that, having stripped a bank of its flowers, they will leave an empty ginger-ale bottle as a substitute. It is not unreasonable to assume that the man who is satisfied to see the countryside strewn with litter has no great passion for the countryside.

It would be unfair to suggest that all who gather wild flowers during the week-end are of

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the tribe of the litter-strewers. Manifestly they are not. To pick a flower is a charming natural instinct, and the poets have justly sung of it. If the number of flowers were infinite, the man who never picked a flower would be a creature fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. The objection to picking flowers on the scale on which it is done to-day is that if it continues there will ultimately not be enough flowers to go round, and that the country for a hundred miles or so round any great town will become as flowerless as Hampstead Heath. The arguments against wholesale flower-picking, indeed, are much the same as the arguments against wholesale lion-shooting. Everybody nowadays, however little inclined to humanitarianism, is in favour of the preservation of wild animals, and, if wild animals are worth protecting in Africa, it seems to me that wild flowers are infinitely more worth protecting in England. The question to be settled is how this protection can be enforced. We cannot very well adopt a system of licences, permitting the holder to pluck so many primroses, so many cowslips, so many bluebells during the season. To put such a system into operation would require the appointment of hundreds of thousands of officials—which would certainly go far towards solving the problem of unemployment—and, even then, it would be ineffective, for flower-picking in excess would immediately appeal to the young

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as a new form of excitement, and half the homes of London would be boastfully showing bowls filled with smuggled flowers. There is the same objection to a law absolutely prohibiting the plucking of wild flowers. Flower-running would become the pastime of the bold and adventurous. The modest violet would become the English equivalent of the American hip-flask. Scar-faced Als would grow rich on the proceeds of illicit daisies, and many a man would be bumped off for nothing worse than having encroached on the dandelion-plucking business of a rival. The imagination revolts, moreover, against the prospect of a law as a result of which a baby and its nurse might be placed in the dock on the charge of having woven a daisy-chain. Are we, then, helpless against the pestilence of flower-pickers? Must we regard it as inevitable that England will in the process of time sink, florally, into the condition of a third-class Power, or even lower?

I cannot think that such a policy of despair will appeal to any man of spirit. Something must be done, and done quickly. For not only are the amateur flower-pickers busy with their work of destruction, but the country children, with a natural desire to earn a few pennies, have now turned in considerable numbers into professional flower-pickers, and may be seen standing by the roadside holding out posies for sale to passing motorists. Even in a tea-garden

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you may see a table laden with cowslips for sale. The wild daffodil has already been exterminated by such methods in many parts of England, and in time the bluebell and the cowslip must follow. I do not see why the law should not at least forbid the exposure of wild flowers for sale. There is more pleasure destroyed than created by the sale of wild flowers, and no man should be allowed to make a profit out of robbing his fellows of the pleasures of the country. And there is one more thing that might be done for the protection of wild flowers. I am no Sabbatarian, but I will gladly support Mr. Morrison if he brings in a Bill to prohibit the use of motor-cars on Sunday except by the medical profession. This is a much more important matter than closing the cinemas. I should like to see motoring prohibited even on Saturdays, or permitted only on condition that no one got out of his car till the end of the journey except in a town containing at least a thousand inhabitants. Such a measure as this, rather than an enactment against flower-picking, will appeal to the minds of reasonable and practical men.

And if we do not protect Nature in some such fashion, Nature will assuredly protect herself. She has already, as I have pointed out, begun to do so. She has seen what is happening, and has made up her mind that it must cease. She knows that there is nothing like rain for

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frightening a flower-picker, and, every week-end, she has poured down her floods as the only means of guarding her treasures from the rapacity of the towns. If we are wise, we shall take warning in time. If we do not, and if we go on with our flower-picking, Nature, I believe, will reply with wetter and wetter week-ends. There is one obvious cause of the deluges of the present year—the flower-picking motorist. Let him abandon his nefarious pursuit, and I am confident that we shall soon be enjoying the blazing week-ends that were almost a matter of course in the springs of our childhood. Otherwise, there is nothing to look forward to but another Noah's flood. Are a few cowslips worth it? Only an anthomaniac could think so.

II. The Heroic Life



IT was after the match between Manningpool University and that great Rugby team, Western Wanderers—a match, which, as everybody knows—for it was a sensational victory—Manningpool University won by two goals to a goal and a try. It was what is called a friendly match, though no stranger to the game would have thought so. I do not mean that the play was foul, but it was certainly fierce. Wanderers were fighting to maintain their unbroken record of victories during the season ; Manningpool, on the other hand, were desperately eager to prove that they were as good a team as any in England, especially that they were as good as either Oxford or Cambridge, the latter of whom had recently been beaten by Wanderers. Hence the forwards fought each other like tigers. No man on either side laid his hands on the ball with impunity. No sooner did he touch it than a ton of legs and arms descended on him till he had to be rescued from beneath the mountain of men that was crushing and smothering him in the mud. Every man outside the scrum was marked so closely that he seldom had time even to pass the ball before a giant suddenly appeared out of nowhere and sent

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him sprawling. Once or twice, it is true, there were beautiful swift movements, as when Mitchel of Manningpool sold the dummy three times while running from the half-way line to score a try ; and Robb performed a marvellous feat in dribbling the ball through the entire Manningpool team except the full-back, over whose head he punted the ball, racing after it like a hare to score. But it was the desperation of the game, as each side in turn fought to regain supremacy over the other, that roused the spectators to such an excitement as I had never before seen at an ordinary match. They stood up and shouted at every score, as if the game had been an International, and the man sitting beside me semaphored with joy every time Manningpool got near the goal-line. I caught the infection myself to some extent, and by the end of the game was feeling as badly bruised and battered with excitement as if I had got accidentally entangled in one of the forward rushes. I was in real need of a restorative as, after leaving the stand, I went into the bar at the back and asked for a whisky and soda.

Everybody in the intervals of trying to get drinks from two overworked barmaids was saying to everybody else what a great game it had been. Old men were seething with excitement and congratulating themselves on having been present at the best match they had seen

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for years. A man beside me, having no companion to whom to say what a fine match it had been, said it to me. 'The best match I have seen this year,' he declared. 'Those Manningpool boys are wonderful.' I agreed that they were. He said that Ragg was wonderful. I assented, and observed that Stagg was wonderful. He asked me didn't I think that Mogg had played a wonderful game. I said I did, and I asked him if he didn't think that Nogg had played a wonderful game. And so we went on, naming one name after another in an ecstasy, as if we had been a couple of Homers discussing a day's fighting on the plain of Troy and the feats of the heroes who had taken part in it.

'What I like in a game of Rugger,' he said, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and narrowing his eyes to slits, 'is no quarter on either side till the whistle blows, and then to know that, whoever wins, even the side that loses is happy, because they're all jolly good sports and all they want is a jolly good game.' I said that what I liked best, too, was no quarter on either side till the whistle blew, and then the good feeling all round afterwards. 'I reckon,' he said, 'that you'll see nothing fiercer in sport than an International at Twickenham, or in Dublin, or at Murrayfield, but never the slightest trace of ill feeling. Good Lord, don't the English cheer the Irish at Twickenham? Don't the Irish

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cheer the English in Dublin? Gawr, I have had some times in Dublin when we went there on a tour. There used to be some teams over there. Old Wesley——’ He paused, with a tender light in his eyes. ‘Wanderers,’ said I. ‘Lansdowne,’ said he. ‘Bective Rangers,’ said I. ‘Trinity,’ said he. ‘Good Lord,’ he repeated, ‘I did have some times in Dublin. Of course’—and a far-away look came into his eyes—‘I think we had more fun in those days than players have nowadays. And I think we were better men. Those Manningpool forwards are good boys, but I doubt if they could have stood up to our little lot when I played for Barneswell. What makes the difference, in my opinion, is that *we* were brought up on beer, and the younger generation to-day isn’t. They go in more for training nowadays, like foreigners do in sport. It may be all right in a way, but give me good old English beer and don’t-give-a-damn. We may have had our faults, but we turned out men. I don’t say that we didn’t sometimes go too far. Gawr, I remember one time, the night before Barneswell were to play United Services, they had to lock old Sam Squidge and me in our bedrooms to sober us up in time for the game. You remember Sam—he played forward for England—and I was forward, too. Well, of course, next day both of us were about finished at half-time, and the captain told us to go into the pavilion and get something to pull us

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together. First, we had champagne, and after that we had brandy. Would you believe it, the game had hardly started again before I was over for a try, and, two minutes after that old Sam Squidge was over for another. Of course, it didn't last. After that we were done.'

'Was this before the war?' I asked him. He said that it was, but added that he had had some jolly good football during the war, too. 'And I don't mind confessing to you,' he added, 'that the time I spent in the Army was about the happiest time of my life.' 'I can see from that,' said I, 'that you have not written a war-novel.' He smiled and shook his head. 'Of course,' he said, 'I understand the point of view of the war-novelists. If a chap was of the brooding type he was bound to find things at the front a bit unpleasant. But I was never—what do you call it?—introspective. As soon as I went into the Army, I said to myself, "My boy, you're alive to-day; you may be dead to-morrow. Enjoy yourself while you can," and enjoy myself I did. Of course, the Turk was a jolly good chap to fight against.' 'You mean you were at Gallipoli?' I asked him. He nodded. 'But I thought,' said I, 'that Gallipoli——' 'I admit,' he interrupted me, 'the landing was a bit unpleasant. But after that——' He waved his hand. 'You see, the Turk is a gentleman, and a thorough

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sportsman—rather like an Englishman. Fights like Hell while he has to, and then the best of friends, just like a game of Rugger. We'd try to kill each other all day, and then when the fighting was over we used all to meet together for a nice little *conversazione* and exchange jam and biscuits and things. Why, we used to bathe within a few yards of each other, and not a shot fired on either side till the bathing was over. I never knew a Turk do a dirty thing while I was there. One evening, after there had been a bit of fighting, and some of our chaps were lying out wounded, a Turkish officer, who spoke English, called out, "Wouldn't you like to fetch your men in ?" I thought it might be a trap, but it was worth risking. And I got my men in without a single shot being fired. That's what the Turks are like—jolly good sportsmen, ready to fight like Hell but always playing the game. And they have a sense of humour, too. You may have heard of the Battle of —, a row in the women's quarter in Cairo—some nasty work among the women. Well, when we got to Gallipoli after that, a Turkish officer shouted out to us, "Come on and fight. You're not fighting women now. You've got to fight men." I enjoyed that,' he chuckled. 'And,' he went on, 'in my opinion, even the old German is a far better sportsman than he generally gets credit for. I've met some jolly decent Germans. I remember about the time

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of the Armistice a German general was brought in, and, as he shook hands all round, he said to us—in English—"Gentlemen, I think we may all congratulate ourselves on having taken part in the finest war the world has ever seen."

'And that's the whole thing in a nutshell. War's a man's game—like Rugger. Jolly good sports on both sides, and good old don't-give-a-damn till the whistle blows.'

It was raining heavily when we set off to catch a bus, and, as the bus we jumped on to was full inside, we had to sit on the top, exposed to a drenching downpour. 'Yes,' my companion continued, 'there are worse things than war.' A raindrop fell into his pipe with a hiss. 'My God,' he said, 'this rain is terrible. We shall get wet through.' He buttoned up his coat collar nervously. 'I hate getting wet,' he added. 'I hope somebody will get out at the next stop and make room for us inside.' At the next stop he hurried to the top of the stair and shouted to the conductor, who told him that there was now room for two. 'Come on,' he cried triumphantly, expecting me to follow him. 'I'll stay here and smoke,' I said, since I prefer smoking to being dry. 'Look here, old man,' he cried, as he paused with a look of concern, 'it's madness—really, it's madness—to sit on the top of a bus in weather like this.' 'I'm all right,' I assured him. 'Well,' he

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declared despairingly, 'every man to his taste. But, if you don't mind, I'll toddle downstairs. Good-bye.' And he hurried down the stair out of the rain into the warmth and security below.

III. The Earthquake ~ ~ ~

I SPENT Saturday night in a small hotel not many miles distant from Oxford. It was a peaceful little hotel that fell quietly asleep in the darkness as soon as the voices of the last birds and the last beer-drinkers had faded into silence. Weary as a result of unaccustomed exposure to the air, I fell under the soporific influence of the place, went early to bed, and was asleep before midnight. Suddenly, between twelve and one, I was awakened by a crash. The house shook as though a football team were tumbling over the furniture in the rooms below. A gramophone began to whine rhythmically about love. Whether it was dancing or fighting that was going on to the music I did not know, but whatever it was, the violence was such that I was surprised that the house did not come falling about my ears. Human voices began to join in. Human feet pounded up the stairs and along the passages and back again. It was impossible to sleep, for as soon as the noise promised to subside, a new song burst out on the gramophone and the hotel shook more alarmingly than ever, as if under the impact of giants jumping in its vitals. These phenomena ceased before two, but sleep had passed from

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me, and I was a wan, insomnious wreck when I went downstairs to breakfast on Sunday morning.

I asked the waitress who were the party who had invaded the hotel so noisily in the small hours. She looked startled, and said that so far as she knew, every one had been in and the hotel had been locked up early. When I described the phenomena of the night, however, she smiled with an air of relief, and said: 'Oh, that was a young gentleman celebrating his twenty-first birthday!' Later in the day I heard that England had been shaken by an earthquake. Friends from various parts of the country boasted of the palpitation of their homes, of vases that danced audibly after midnight, of pencils that rolled off tables. Even as far away as Hull, I read in a newspaper, people had rushed from their houses in alarm. I could find no evidence, however, of anyone's having experienced a shock of anything like the same intensity as that which I myself experienced in the little waterside hotel. I am therefore inclined to wonder whether the seismologists are right in their explanation of Saturday night's earthquake. They attribute it, I gather, to a flaw in the earth's crust somewhere under the North Sea. Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the whole thing may have been due to a young gentleman's celebrating his twenty-first birthday near Oxford, the phenomena being most violent at the scene of the

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celebration and spreading with diminishing effect till they reached the coast and rattled the windows of Hull and Lowestoft?

On discussing the earthquake with other people, I was surprised to find that most of them regarded it as a joke. Some of them were obviously proud to have been contemporaries of the greatest earthquake recorded in English history, but the general attitude was one of amusement. The men of science encouraged this attitude by declaring that earthquakes in England always are and always will be harmless. Thus we were lulled once more into a sense of security in a world in which there is no security, and an earthquake that should have turned us into philosophers has left us exactly as we were.

This is regrettable, for it is of the utmost importance that our sense of insecurity should not be allowed to fall permanently asleep. Like ourselves, it should have its sleeping and its waking hours. If we were perpetually conscious of the insecurity of life and happiness we might easily become morbid, and lose our ardour alike in work and in pleasure. If we are never conscious of it, however, we are likely to set a false value on what is really valueless, and to waste our years in the pursuit of things that are not worth pursuing. Hence, it is an excellent medicine for the mind that we should occasionally realize that we are travelling through

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space on a fragile crust of earth that may one day subside, bringing a sudden end to ourselves, our possessions and our ambitions as our world topples into ruins amid the cracks. Many of the philosophers, at least, have thought so, and have made it their business to remind us that we build up our businesses and pursue our dreams under the shadow of death. We are all condemned to die, it has been said, but under an indefinite reprieve, and we cannot measure the worth of anything in life by a standard which takes no account of this.

On the other hand, it must be admitted, the sense of the insecurity of life affects different men in extraordinarily different fashions. One man comes to the conclusion that it is best in the circumstances to eat, drink and be merry. Another, impressed by the brevity of existence, sees in this a reason against wasting hours so few and so precious. Another is led by the spectacle of an evanescent world to the discovery of a world that will not pass with time, and to live as though even now he were one of its citizens. We saw during the War that the nearness of death, while it might make one man religious, would make his neighbour reckless. Hence, it must be inferred that it requires more than a war or an earthquake or a volcanic eruption to convert human beings in general into philosophers. The men and women who live in the

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region of a volcano are not conspicuously wiser or more virtuous than those who live in secure and placid villages. The generation that lived in the fear of death during the great plague was less busied about the nature of the good life than the much securer mid-Victorians. This has led some people to believe that human beings are unteachable. And many of us are certainly unteachable by calamity. The truth is, even when our insecurity is staring us in the face, we can temporarily escape and hide ourselves from it in a variety of excitements. And we do.

Whether we enjoy life more as a result of a false belief in our security or as a result of recognizing the insecurity of life, is a question not easy to decide. I am myself of the opinion that the happiest man is the man who is conscious of the fleetingness of the world in which he lives and who measures the values of things by the knowledge of his and our mortality. There are men with whom the thought of mortality has been a disease—men who have all but been conscious of the worms consuming their bodies while they were still alive—and these are not to be envied. But with most men the knowledge that they must ultimately die does not weaken the pleasure in being at present alive. To the poet the world appears still more beautiful as he gazes at flowers that are doomed to wither, at springs that come to too speedy an

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end. The loveliness of May stirs him the more deeply because he knows that it is fading even as he looks at it. It is not that the thought of universal mortality gives him pleasure, but that he hugs the pleasure all the more closely because he knows it cannot be his for long. Besides, there is probably a deep pleasure to be had merely from facing facts. Men often shrink from truth, but, when they cease to shrink, they find it enjoyable. A man of science, if he could fix the date of the end of the world, would cry 'Eureka!' and would rapturously sit down to write a book about it. Not that he would take a monstrous delight in the prospect of the extermination of the human race, but the charms of truth would drive every other consideration out of his head. Probably it is for a similar reason that tragedy gives us a far profounder pleasure than comedy. Comedy is just as true to one side of life as tragedy is to another. But tragedy faces truths that comedy ignores, and depicts a world that knows death—a world that has not merely enjoyed itself and its blunders but has suffered and wept over its dead for countless generations. Tragedy is an exalted expression of our sense of insecurity. Comedy helps us to forget this. I, myself, as a rule read comedy and commend tragedy.

I am sure that, if the sense of insecurity enriches literature, it has an equally enriching effect in politics. This was seen during the War,

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when, alarmed by the sense of insecurity, statesmen performed the impossible. It is a commonplace, that, if statesmen faced the problems of peace with the same determination with which they faced the problems of war, they would find the solutions as miraculously simple. With the return of peace, however, the sense of security returns, and in a secure world men cannot be persuaded that it is necessary to make the same efforts and the same sacrifices for the common good. What was then national co-operation now becomes Socialism. The individual returns to his money-making on the assumption that he is living in a world in which money-making can be securely pursued for ever. He feels that, with a good bank balance, he is as firmly established as Ben Nevis. When he is told by the pessimists that civilization is crumbling, he tells himself that at least it will last his time. He believes that earthquakes are dangerous only in countries not his own. So did I till I was awakened by the young gentleman celebrating his twenty-first birthday. At the time I was indignant with him, but at least he forced me to realize that I was living in a world that might at any moment tumble in ruins about my careless pillow.

IV. The Butt-Gatherer ~ ~ ~

HE was a smallish man, wearing a coat that had obviously been given to him by a broad-shouldered six-footer. He shuffled along the Brighton front in shoes that were so widely gashed that his grey socks were visible above the toes. He was, I should say, in the late sixties—an elderly man with a parrot nose and a grey moustache—and walked, like Mammon, with his eyes on the ground. He peered about him like a bird in search of food, and at every few steps he bent down quickly, picked up a cigarette-butt from the pavement, and put it into his pocket. His course was zigzag, for one cigarette-butt would be lying near the railings and the next under a deck-chair. He was unconscious of everything on earth except the cigarette-butts. He was indifferent to the sun as it shone above a sea that was all glare and no colour. He had no eyes for the young men in bathing-costumes who were lazily paddling their canoes over the still water. The stall on the beach at which a man was preparing an array of little dishes of whelks, cockles, and mussels had as little charm for him as the large hotels across the road where people were arriving in motor-cars to devour five-course lunches. The

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black fishing-smacks on the shingle, the white piers projecting light-heartedness into the sea, the passing of the young and idle along the promenade, the peace of the Sunday morning—he gave none of them a glance, but hurried over to a refuse box, lifted all the paper out, and looked carefully to see whether by chance a few stray cigarette-butts might be lying at the bottom. He shook his head disappointedly when he found there were none, and thrust back the paper into the box. Then he put his hand on the railings and peered down at the pavement on the lower promenade in the hope that the largesse of butts might be richer there. Apparently it was not, for he continued to search along the front, zigzagging and dipping down like a seagull looking for food on a dirty fore-shore.

It was a morning on which one was too indolent even to feel a charitable impulse. And when the old man had gone out of sight I reproached myself for not having given him a cigarette, or a packet of cigarettes. Clearly, he was one of the smoking brotherhood—a capnosophist such as the acrimonious non-smoker can never be expected to understand. He had a craving for tobacco—that craving that divides the race of men sharply into two camps. I do not know whether he afterwards used the butts to fill a pipe—a kind of smoking that burns the tongue, but that is better than no smoking at

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all—or whether he begged enough pence during the week to buy cigarette-papers and roll new cigarettes out of the refuse of the old. He was not smoking as he worked. Like a wise man he was saving the tobacco till he got home, when it would last longer than in the strong sea air. Pleasure deferred is pleasure doubled, as every one knows who has found himself five miles away from a tobacco shop with only one cigarette left in the packet. Shall I smoke it now, or shall I keep it? How often that problem has vexed the human intellect! And only the fool has decided: ‘Smoke it now.’

I do not know whether tobacco is worth all the pangs that mortal men have suffered through love of it. I have myself given it up and thought of giving it up more times than I care to remember. But at least there is in the craving for it a conspicuous moral element. It strengthens the will—the will to obtain tobacco—and gives a purpose to life. I have lived pennilessly with a penniless man, both of us smokers, and know what it is to hoard up the cigarette-butts of to-day as material for the cigarettes of to-morrow. A revolting practice in the eyes of the fastidious rich, but starving men cannot afford to be squeamish. A little deeper in penury, and my friend and I, too, might conceivably have slipped out into the streets after dark and searched the pavements for fag-ends carelessly chucked away by butchers’ boys more fortunate

The Butt-Gatherer

than ourselves. A weak man in such circumstances might decide to give up smoking altogether, but the resolute man suppresses his qualms as cowardice, sets his jaw, and earns his smoke by honest toil.

I am sure that, if Wordsworth had been alive and had seen the old butt-gatherer at work, he would not have let him pass without a reflection on his moral significance. He would almost certainly have entered into conversation with him, though if one may judge from his poems, Wordsworth was one of the worst men at conversational openings who ever lived. 'The Leech-Gatherer' is one of the most beautiful poems in English literature, but Wordsworth's own conversation, as recorded in it, is extraordinarily fatuous :

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirr'd with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conn'd
As if he had been reading in a book :
And now such freedom as I could I took ;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say :
' This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.'

This was probably Wordsworth's stock opening when conversing with old men upon whom he wished to moralize. Had he approached the butt-gatherer on the Brighton front, who doubts that he would have addressed the same line to him ? I doubt, however, whether his

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observation would have been received by the butt-gatherer in the same spirit in which the leech-gatherer received it :

A gentle answer did the old man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew.

The butt-gatherer was a cross-looking old man and, as soon as he realized that Wordsworth's object was not to supply him with cigarettes but to draw a moral from him, I fear he would have answered him in the language of an admiral. Or he might merely have regarded him as a slightly imbecile busybody, and have shuffled away from him as fast as his tattered shoes could carry him. He would have been left in no doubt if he had waited for Wordsworth to continue :

' What kind of work is that which you pursue ?
This is a lonesome place for one like you.'

The more one reads Wordsworth the more one is amazed that he ever got to know any of his fellow-human-beings. and that he was able to write so divinely about men and children to whom he talked so dully. For even when the leech-gatherer had told him everything about himself and his trade, and had apparently told it at great length, Wordsworth had paid so little attention that :

My question eagerly I did renew,
' How is it that you live, and what is it you do ? '

The Butt-Gatherer

There is no other example in literature of so exasperating a listener. If the leech-gatherer had not been a man of saintly patience he would, being in a lonely place, have raised his 'long grey staff of shaven wood' and brought it down with a crack on the skull of the greatest poet of his age. Possibly, however, he, too, had a nervous suspicion of mental derangement, for, instead of behaving in the natural manner of a busy man interrogated by an interfering poet,

He with a smile did then his words repeat.

Was the smile a smile of saintliness or of apprehension? We shall never know, for Wordsworth was not observant of such matters. He was content to draw his moral, and to immortalize the old man in a poem with the sub-title 'Resolution and Independence'.

He might well have affixed the same label to the old man who collected the cigarette-butts. The butt-gatherer, too, was a model of resolute purpose in a world that seemed to have no purpose but the pursuit of pleasure. Compared with him everybody else on the front appeared to stroll listlessly through the light of the May morning. He had the eagerness of a wild creature in search of its prey. The rest of us were, beside him, little better than indolent parasites. As for independence, he had cut down his wants to a minimum. He could cheerfully go without things that the rest of us

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could not go without. He was free from the burden of vanity and self-consciousness. He did his morning's hunting, careless of the eyes that watched him, careless of everything but the store of stale tobacco that he was collecting, and out of which, when he got home, he would build his own Paradise. I wish I had had the energy to give him a packet of cigarettes so that the gates of Heaven might have swung open for him more easily.

V. Time Flies



IN these days of sweepstakes, guessing competitions, and prizes that enrich the winner not for a day but for a lifetime, it behoves a man to think seriously of what he would do if he won. To be prepared for all eventualities, even the most unlikely eventualities, is the part of a philosopher, and the news that he had drawn the winning number in a lottery should not take the wise man unawares.

As a rule, the winners of these great prizes, on being interviewed, declare boldly that they intend to go on with their work. This suggests that great sums of money suddenly achieved make the imagination numb. There is, however, in the idea of work much that appeals to the moral nature of man. A minor philosopher has said that work is vulgarized thought; but most of us, when we have recovered from the measles of youthful heresy, regard it more realistically as the prime necessity of existence—even, perhaps, as the prime pleasure. Having acquired the habit of work, we doubt whether in middle age we should be able to shake it off. As many a too industrious millionaire has discovered, one cannot learn to idle at the age of fifty. The idler, like the poet, must begin

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young. To grow inured to work is to experience a gradual change of one's entire nature. One finds oneself in the grip of something stronger than oneself, and from this even great riches can bring no ransom.

Hence, if any one has asked me in recent years what I should do if I won a sweepstake, I have usually replied that, having got into the habit of it, I should probably be unable to stop working. This was my honest conviction until the past week, for I had an uneasy conscience at the thought of doing nothing from one year's end to another. Yet, after a few days spent in idleness at Brighton I am not so confident. I find, as time passes so swiftly, as meal follows meal so rapidly, that it is difficult to imagine when work could be fitted into a normal and natural day. That time flies I have always heard, but I doubt if it ever flies so fast as when one is doing nothing. There is scarcely breathing space to read a newspaper. If I walk to the end of the West Pier, and put twopence in the slot of the gramophone that plays 'Oh Donna Clara', the morning has gone by in a flick, almost before I know it has begun. If I sit down and look at the sea, the monotony of the waves pouring in a silver race towards the beach does not slow down the hours. A cormorant passes, a long black neck with wings. Half an hour later another cormorant passes. Nothing has happened in the interval but the

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wash of the waves under the pier. But one does not desire anything to happen. If one were afflicted with the much-discussed modern restlessness, there are amusements in abundance within a few paces—miniature golf, skeeball, shooting-galleries, mutoscopes with photographs of women in various stages of undress, enough penny-in-the-slot machines to keep a tired business man distracted from his worries for a month, a bar, a phrenologist. But for these one has no time any more than for work. One is being rushed round the sun in one's deck-chair too quickly. All one asks is that it should stand still for a few hours and leave one time to enjoy its beams.

In the afternoons I am more restless, for I have an object in life. As one that hath been long in city pent, I wish to go into the country and to see and hear birds, especially the migrants and, to be still more particular, the nightingale. It is now raining heavily, but I am of a hopeful disposition. The rain cannot last for ever, and, even if it does, I have before now heard the nightingale singing in sleet. By the time one has got the car out and driven to the nearest place that is worth driving to a considerable part of the afternoon has gone. One must get away from the main roads, for, even if a nightingale were singing on a main road, its song would lose something of its enchantment amid the roar of passing motor-cars. One must

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therefore find an unfrequented lane. The worst of unfrequented lanes is that the copses likely to be the haunts of nightingales are usually situated at a part of the road at which it is impossible to stop without causing an obstruction. Another considerable portion of the afternoon passes in the search for the right kind of copse in the right part of the lane. Then, when one has found it, one hears a black-bird. The English resident birds are charming, and it is only a kind of ornithological snobbishness that leads men to believe that the songs of the foreign birds are better. Still, resident birds we have always with us. We applauded them in February, and, compared with them, the willow-wren and the nightingale have just now something of the romantic fascination of the returned prodigal. Again and again I paused at the right kind of copse, and listened intently to hear a strange voice, if, indeed, a bird's voice would have been audible through the noise the cold deluge was making on the hood of the car. The trees looked dismal—oak and ash were leafless and birdless. The roadsides were for the season flowerless. Violets shone among the grass on the banks, and on the roadside cuckoo-flowers trembled in a wet wind that had silenced the cuckoos. Late blackthorns were in flower. It was nearer March than May everywhere but in the calendar. Yet time did not stand still. Hope fled as the afternoon passed,

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but time fled faster. One would have liked to hear even a chiffchaff before the day was over, but it was not to be. 'To-morrow may be fine,' we said. 'We shall come back again to-morrow.'

The weather-prophets were against us. They foretold a fall in the temperature, and certainly on the next morning the wind blew in a chill hurricane. Once more the wren and the chaffinch and the thrush and the blackbird sang above the weather, and the song of the farmyard cock was blown across the fields. But there was no shelter from the wind in hedge or tree, and, except for a willow-wren, the birds that had wintered in Africa were as silent as if they had been dead. Hours were spent in looking for them, in sitting still beside familiar bushes, in wandering at a walking-pace along green and lonely lanes. Three afternoons were fully occupied in the quest before a burst of song from a plantation outside Ditchling brought us to a halt. A nightingale was singing, but even then a motor-lorry came along and we had to move away so as not to cause an obstruction.

If, then, it takes three days—almost half a week, almost a hundredth part of a year—to hear one small bird singing for about one minute, and if during those three days time flies so fast that one scarcely seems to have risen till it is time to go to bed, how is it possible to find time for work without sacrificing much that

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makes life worth living ? I find myself so busy at Brighton that I have not had time to hear Elizabeth Schumann or to see Gracie Fields, both of whom are here, or to go to Plumpton races or to visit the museum where stuffed birds may be seen in their natural surroundings. If the first morning had not been wet I should not even have had time to visit the Aquarium and watch the sea-horse sailing through the water with his magical propellor. Some people complain that they can find nothing to do. My chief complaint is that I cannot find enough time to do it in. If I had a fortune, and could live in this town with the civilized air, a day that lasted only twenty-four hours would seem far too short, even if I did nothing but sit in a deck-chair at the end of the pier. If I worked, it would not be in order to pass the time, but because the conscience of my ancestors pricked me. But I doubt if I should have time to work. Contrary to the common belief, time moves slowly in the cities and towns, but in country places and by the sea it flies faster than a swallow.

VI. The Sins of Society ~ ~ ~

SOME one recently left on my desk a little paper-backed book, fifty years old, called *Sports that Kill*, by the Rev. T. de Witt Talmage, author of *Crumbs Swept Up*, *Around the Tea-Table*, and *Abominations of Modern Society*. I do not know whether my unknown benefactor, in leaving the book, aimed at my spiritual amendment or not, but I opened it with curiosity, for I had often heard of Dr. Talmage towards the end of the last century as a powerful and sensational preacher, who was as great an influence in America as Spurgeon was in England. He belonged to a class of preachers which has now all but disappeared, at least on this side of the Atlantic—bold and comprehensive denunciators, rattlers of the gates of Hell in the ears of the common man, evangelists who saw life largely in terms of temptations of the Devil and who believed that human beings leading ordinary lives were in danger of everlasting torture.

It is easy for any one who reads *Sports that Kill* to see why this type of evangelist has vanished. He vanished partly because, among Christians themselves, the belief in a material Hell has become rarer, and partly because, even

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among those who believe that a material Hell exists, it is no longer possible to believe that human beings will be sent there for doing the particular things that Talmage regarded as so unpardonable. Puritanism still survives, being in some form or another as immortal as human nature, but even the Puritans are to be found to-day indulging in many of the pleasures that to him seemed to lead straight to Hell. You will find the Puritan to-day in the theatre, in the public-house, and on the race-course ; you will find him reading novels. He has tried all these things and found them less injurious than the old evangelists averred. He knows from his experience of life that, when Talmage wrote : ‘ How often has a condemned man on the scaffold, in his dying speech, said : “ The theatre ruined me ! ” ’ he was implying something that simply was not true. This magnification of little pleasures into monstrous vices is an offence against common sense, and it is only as a curiosity of belief that it any longer interests us.

Without pretending that an ordinary theatrical performance incites the members of the audience to rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things, one can at least marvel at the power of imagination that saw in the theatre a flaming suburb of the Cities of the Plain. Neither the players nor the audiences are spared in the thunderous pages of *Sports*

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that Kill. As regards the audiences, Talmage makes the concession that persons of 'spotless virtue' are to be found in them, but he goes on to declaim :

Are the great audiences of the theatre made up chiefly of this sort ? No, no. Husbands who have lost all love for home go there. Horse-jockeys go there. Thieves go there. The lecherous go there. Spendthrifts go there. Drunkards go there. Lost women go there. The offscourings of society go there by scores and hundreds. They block up the doorway. They hang over the gallery, and ogle, and smirk, and shout aloud in the applause that greets a brilliant passage, or one that caricatures religion, or sneers at virtue as prudery or over-niceness, or hints at indecency, and makes a pure-hearted wife or mother turn away her head and say, 'God forgive us for ever coming to such a place as this.'

As one reads such a passage recalling a faded era, one realizes how little truth there is in the modern theory that there was no romance, no colour, in the lives of those who held a creed that now seems narrow. Does any one in these anti-Puritanical days see the audience in a theatre in quite such romantic colours as those in which Talmage saw it ? There are few spectacles less interesting than an ordinary

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theatrical audience ; yet to Talmage and those who agreed with him it was as exciting as a scene painted by Ouida. Talmage's vision of life was possible as false as Ouida's, but, like hers, it was flamboyant. The theatre for him was populated by sensational characters, and was the site of sensational events. Even his description of the bad effects of theatre-going on the health of the spectators is sensational. 'The American theatre,' he declares, 'has filled the land with an army of invalids. We see them dying with dyspepsia, with neuralgia, with liver complaints, of consumption, and there is congratulation in Hell that the theatre killed them.' Clearly, the sensational sermon of those days was the imaginative substitute for the sensational novel of our time ; and I cannot help thinking that to thousands of people it must have been at least as thrilling.

What need was there of theatre-going and novel-reading, indeed, among people to whom the everyday pleasures of their neighbours afforded so exciting an imaginative interest ? We feel that, in warning his hearers against the habit of novel-reading, Talmage was not depriving them of a pleasure but providing them with one. His picture of the confirmed novel-reader is as vivid a piece of fiction as is to be found in almost any of the novels against which he issued a warning. He affirms :

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‘A man who gives himself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be nerveless, inane, and a nuisance. He will be fit neither for the store, nor the shop, nor the field. A woman who gives herself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be unfitted for the duties of wife, mother, sister, daughter. There she is, hair dishevelled, countenance vacant, cheeks pale, hands trembling, bursting into tears at midnight over the fate of some unfortunate lover; in the day-time, when she ought to be busy, staring by the half-hour at nothing; biting her finger-nails into the quick.’

It is only fair to say that Talmage did not condemn all novels indiscriminately, but it is clear that he regarded the habit of novel-reading as being scarcely less demoralizing than drug-taking. Unfortunately he was not particularly helpful in his advice to an imaginary interrogator who wished to know how he could tell the good books from the bad without having read them. ‘There is always,’ was Talmage’s reply, ‘something suspicious about a bad book. I never knew an exception—something suspicious in the index or the style of illustration. This venomous reptile almost always carries a warning rattle.’ If this were true, how easy it would be to establish a censorship of books! The censor would not even have to read the books he condemned. A member of his staff

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would whisper to him, 'Something suspicious in the index,' and on the index the book would have to go.

All these denunciations of large classes of harmless people sound strange in contemporary ears, but I am not sure that we have abandoned Talmage's habit of denouncing people so completely as we have abandoned his theology. I have suggested that it is only as a curiosity of belief that his magnification of little pleasures into large vices any longer interests us, but, when one reflects on the condemnations of ordinary pleasures that one hears on so many sides to-day, one cannot be sure that curiosities of belief of a similar kind have ceased to exist. It is only a few days since I read in a London newspaper a leading article in which the writer declared emphatically that the present generation of the young is 'benumbed by sport', and gave this as the reason why no great figures in public life or the arts have appeared since the war. Talmage would have looked on sport (apart from horse-racing) as a blessed alternative to the theatre and the novel; did he not write in favour of croquet, parlour games, conundrums, and even the sportsman's gun? To-day, when people see more plays and read more novels than in the nineteenth century, no one can utter a protest against these without incurring general ridicule; but sport is becoming more and more suspect as the corrupting vice of the times.

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Again and again I have met men lately who fulminated against the love of sport as though it were now the leading sin of society. It was not from the Puritanical point of view that they denounced it; they were mostly anti-Puritans who believed many things to be right that Talmage believed to be wrong. They could, indeed, give no clear reasons why they condemned the love of sport. All that I could extract from any of them was that it was in some way 'demoralizing'. One of them, a vehement enemy of Puritanism, confined his denunciation to horse-racing. 'You can see how demoralizing it is if you look at the faces of the people going home from a race-meeting,' he said. It was exactly the same thing that Talmage had said of the faces of the people who go to the theatre and read novels. I have heard nearly everything, from religion to dog-racing, from stockbroking to the love of the arts, condemned on the strength of the faces of its followers. If you dislike a thing, you dislike the faces of those who are addicted to it. The atheist dislikes the faces of priests; the teetotaller dislikes the faces of publicans. To the hostile eye the world is full of people who have faces like Dr. Fell.

Another denouncer of the love of sport included football among the sports that are demoralizing society at the present time. I asked him what alternative to football and other

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games he would consider an improvement. Did he think the ordinary play a more intellectual entertainment than a game of football, or the ordinary novel less frivolous? Talmage at least offered the alternative of a serious religious life to the frivolities he condemned, but the modern censor has as a rule no alternative to offer that is not as frivolous as the thing he denounces. To the philosopher, no doubt, all excessive absorption in frivolous amusements, whether artistic or athletic, is a waste of life; but, till we have become philosophers ourselves, is it reasonable, to condemn the young for preferring sport to philosophy? If human beings became less frivolous we should no doubt have a greatly improved and, indeed, a happier world, but how can the mass of men become less frivolous except as the result of a religious revival or of a social or political movement that has the quality of a religious revival. Till this arrives let us cheerfully recognize the fact that there are few things less demoralizing than playing or watching games. Too much croquet may kill the soul, and many an hour is spent on the golf course that might be occupied in wrestling with the titanic problems of our day. But there are worse employments, and on these a world that abandoned sport would be likely to fall back.

VII. Arthur St. John Adcock ◊ ◊

GOOD men, I suspect, are commoner than one would gather from realistic fiction, but no one can know many good men intimately. By a good man I mean a man who is busily and permanently unselfish, and who will take even more trouble in the interests of other people than in his own. Goodness of this sort is a fiery energy of the spirit, and when a man possessed of it dies his friends feel that a large portion of the kindness of the human race has vanished. I have known four men in whom unselfishness existed to an extraordinary degree. St. John Adcock is the third of them to have died.

Novelist, poet, critic, essayist, journalist, Adcock was so busily occupied on a hundred tasks that you would have thought that he could have had little time for anything beyond the day's work. He was, moreover, a man of delicate constitution, who, if he had been rich and self-centred, might easily have settled down to the cautious life of an invalid. Some people hold that it is possible for a human being to be kept alive by courage alone, and I often thought of Adcock as a man who would have died long ago but for his heroic will. In early life he would permit neither pain nor

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illness to interrupt work which, for the sake of others, he could not afford to postpone. On one occasion, when he was badly burnt while putting out a fire caused by the explosion of an oil-lamp, his doctor sent him to bed in bandages and told him that on no account must he do any work for several weeks, and that his life depended on his lying perfectly still. Adcock, however, though suffering the extreme of agony, insisted upon having pen and paper brought in to him between the doctor's visits, and no doubt paid the doctor's bill, among others, by writing essays conveying to his readers what an incomparably cheerful place the world is. He suffered from another serious and recurrent illness, the only cure for which he was again and again told was an immediate operation. In those days he felt that he could spare neither the time nor the money for an operation, and insisted on recovering without one. 'Well,' said the doctor, 'you have pulled through this time, but if you ever have another attack you must be operated on at once, or it will be fatal !' But other attacks came, and were survived in the same cheerful spirit. Many men shrink from operations through nervousness, but Adcock refused them through courage. No stranger meeting him could have imagined that this cheerful, jesting man with the readiest smile on earth had passed so much of his life under the threat of death.

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It is all the more astonishing that, though he would not allow illness to interfere with his work, his time was always at the mercy of his friends. When I knew him first he was doing a vast amount of work, some of it for very little pay. He made it a principle at that time never to refuse work, no matter how badly paid : he had a feeling, he said, that to refuse work was unlucky. Often when I passed his house towards midnight and looked up at the lighted window of the room in which he was working, I would pause and knock at his door, never reflecting that I was interrupting a man engaged in earning his living ; and he would always come smiling to the door and invite me in. I have known very few men who in similar circumstances would treat such an invasion as though it were a pleasure. If he felt weary of his guest or impatient, however, he never showed it. He would talk and smoke cigarettes as though the whole day were before him, and, between one and two, would walk up the road with me to my lodgings. Then he would go back and sit down opposite his typewriter to finish the work that had been interrupted. I myself should never have admitted a visitor in such circumstances, or, if he had been admitted by accident, I should have been so maddened by his presence that my boredom would have bored him out of the house. And I was not his only inopportune visitor. He welcomed us all like a man of unbounded leisure.

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Like many men who work twice as hard as their fellows, indeed, he seemed to have time for everything. He would put himself to infinite pains to find any one else work, as though he had not himself enough work to do to occupy all his waking hours. It was his passion for helping other people that led to the popular appreciation of the genius of Mr. W. H. Davies. Mr. Davies, then living (I think) in a Rowton House, had scraped up enough money to publish a paper-backed volume of poems, *The Soul's Destroyer*, and had sent copies to a number of writers. Several eminent men had written letters of appreciation, but Adcock, who was enthusiastic about the verse, was not content merely to write and say so, but made an appointment with Mr. Davies in a City public-house in order to discover whether there was anything that he could do to help him. He heard from Mr. Davies the extraordinary story of his life, and realized that there was an excellent newspaper 'story' even in a book of verse produced by such a man in such circumstances—a 'story' which would help the book to sell more than pages of academic criticism. He hurried to the *Daily Mail* office and persuaded the news editor to publish an article on the poet and his work. He also obtained copies of the book, and became a salesman among his friends and acquaintances, pushing the work more eagerly than if he had been making a profit on the sales.

Arthur St. John Adcock

From that moment Mr. Davies's fame was assured, and the world was ready to hail *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* enthusiastically when it appeared a few years later.

Adcock, indeed, looked after other men's fame more than after his own. He never asked for praise, and, if he did not receive it, he was never embittered. If he sent you a copy of one of his books, it was only after it had already been reviewed in the paper with which you were connected, so that it should be clear that he was not attempting to make use of your friendship. Of all his work, he liked his poetry best, and in this, I think, he was right. But he did not grumble if he saw the golden adjectives awarded to poets who deserved them less than he. I do not mean that he was indifferent; he was as sensitive and as easily hurt as the most querulous praise-seeker. But he had an enviable power of accepting things as they are, and went through life with the spirit of a good-natured stoic.

It is difficult to give a just impression of the virtues of such a man. Most men have done unselfish actions at one time or another, but the record of an unselfish action gives only a faint clue to a man's character. Adcock, however, differed from most other men in doing unselfish actions all the time. If a friend, or even an acquaintance, died in poverty, it was Adcock who first hastened to the assistance of the dead

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man's family, made all the funeral arrangements, and wrote innumerable letters in order to raise money for the funeral expenses. There are men whose very existence, one feels, is an insurance against fate—men who, if one died penniless, would see to it to the best of their power that ones survivors would be looked after. Adcock was such a man. Most men become engrossed in their own affairs to a point at which it is impossible to live in this continuous charity. Their energy is mainly and almost necessarily egotistic. They wish well to others, but can help them only intermittently. Adcock, however, went through life squandering his time in helping other people.

Those who knew him often compared him as a man to Charles Lamb, and he was a Londoner of the same humane and gracious spirit, fundamentally serious and addicted to jesting. He had few of Lamb's intolerances, however, though he was more pugnacious in politics. The only time that he ever approached anger in argument was when, in the course of a political discussion, some one spoke ill of the poor. If he had been a pauper himself he could probably have lived in a slum resignedly and cheerfully enough. But he could endure injustice more easily for himself than for others. That I believe to be, not a sentimental exaggeration, but literally true.

It is said to be a bad sign—the sign of a

Arthur St. John Adcock

certain weakness of character—if a man has no enemies. But no one who knew Adcock could believe this to be true. If there was any weakness in him, it was only that he gave credit to other people for being better than they were, whether as human beings or as writers. But, even as regards the faults of others, it always seemed to me that he recognized them shrewdly and humorously enough, though he would not publish them broadcast. In all the essentials of character he was as firm as granite, fulfilling all his obligations and adding to them, living for his affections, his friendships, and his work, constantly lending and never borrowing, youthful in his ardours to the end, indefatigable and indomitable. To have lived in this fashion is surely to have succeeded in life, and to have succeeded magnificently.

VIII. ?

SOCRATES asked so many questions that the exasperated Athenians compelled him to drink poison. King Lear subjected his daughters to a questionnaire, and he and his daughters perished tragically as a result. Undeterred by warnings such as these, American moralists and psychologists to-day are indulging in an orgy of questions and questionnaires that does not spare even the child of twelve.

The latest evidence of this is contained in a book entitled *Concerning Our Girls and What They Tell Us: A Study of the Confidential Relationship Between Mothers and Adolescent Daughters*. This is an account of 'an initial step in the development of a questionnaire that would measure the confidential relationship between mother and daughter', and it is claimed by the author, Dr. Eugenie Andruss Leonard, that it 'indicates . . . the possibilities of the method of research and the need of an instrument of diagnosis and measurement'. It is apparently hoped that girls will share more confidences with their mothers if their mothers know what kind of confidences girls share with their mothers. Hence, Dr. Leonard recently

prepared a long list of questions relating to what a girl tells, and what she should tell her mother, and addressed them to four groups of girls between the ages of twelve and nineteen in New York City.

The questions now republished, begin innocently enough. The second of them runs : ' When you have been to church and have been deeply impressed by the sermon, do you tell your mother ? ' This kind of question is classified as the Scale-How-Often Type of test (SHO), and the statistics inform us that, of two hundred and eighty-two girls who have been deeply impressed by the sermon, eighty-two always tell their mothers, sixty-nine usually, eighty-nine sometimes, twenty-seven rarely, and fifteen never. We get another measurement of the confidential relationship between mother and daughter by SHO from the answers to the question : ' When your father's gentle care of your mother makes you admire him very much, do you tell your mother ? ' Many fathers will be astonished to learn that, according to SHO, this is the subject on which, above all others, the modern daughter is always ready to babble freely to her mother. On the whole, however, girls appear to be a frank and confiding race, at least in New York. There is an obstinate minority who never tell their mothers anything, but there is always a majority in favour of telling in whole or in part. Thus, to

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the question—Scale-How-Much Type of test (SHM)—‘When your brother has persuaded you to stop going with a group of rough girls, and you are really thankful to him, do you tell your mother?’ one hundred and thirty-five girls replied, ‘All’, while only thirty-one replied ‘Nothing’. Once more there comes a thunder of ‘yeses’ in answer to the question: ‘When the girls in the hiking club to which you belong pair off with the boys and allow hugging and kissing, do you tell your mother?’ Is not the modern girl nonpareil? She tells her mother everything. She even, by a large majority, answers ‘Yes’ to the question: ‘Do you tell your mother when you have been to a big picnic and have seen the rescue of a drowning child, and you have resolved to learn to swim so that you might be able to rescue some one in similar danger?’ I doubt whether in any previous age a parallel could be discovered to the close and confidential relationship between mother and daughter suggested by the emphatic affirmative answer to this last question (Battery Of Questions, or BOQ, Type). Noble infants! They emerge as triumphantly from BOQ as from SHO and SHM. There may be a considerable drop in the majority for the ‘Ayes’ on the question: ‘When you have fallen in love do you tell your mother?’ But on every ordinary question, every question that touches the graver problems of life, such as: ‘When the

students themselves make a ruling against improper dancing at class parties and you feel proud of the decision, do you tell your mother ? ' the modern girl is as sound as a bell and has as little reticence.

There are in all a hundred questions—representing ' one hundred selected life situations '—in this searching questionnaire, and the farther one reads the more illuminating the answers become. Thus the fourth section, which is taken up with the Question-Yes-No Type of test (QYN), throws light on the psychology, not only of children, but of the individual child, such as we look for in vain in SHO, SHM, and BOQ. Here the child is expected to answer ' Why ? ' as well as ' Yes or No.' For example, ' When you have wondered what God is like, whether He is old, or like human beings, with hopes and heartaches, do you ask your mother about it ? Yes, No ? Why ? ' The reasons given by those who replied ' No ' to this question range from ' Mother is busy ' to ' She also doesn't believe in God ', from ' Can't talk about it ' to ' Mother's ideas of God and mine differ '. Among the affirmatives, the reasons are as various, including : ' Mother can tell you what He is like,' ' Mother knows everything,' and—most charming of all—' She wonders, too.' I am not sure that it is quite fair to ask school-girls to answer such a question as : ' Do your parents disagree or quarrel much ? ' even though

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they are allowed to sign their replies with pseudonyms such as 'Mary Pickford' and 'Banana Oil'. Still, truth is mighty, especially psychological truth, and children are never more fascinating than when making candid revelations about the life of the home.

And, after all, there are few less perplexing questions to answer than : 'Do your parents disagree and quarrel much ?' Compared with this, how difficult is the problem involved in Life Situation, No. 79 :

Mabel and a boy friend had been disorderly during a Sunday school committee meeting while a worship service was being planned. The leader had lost his temper and said cross things. Mabel was both sorry and angry. She didn't know just what to do. She ran most of the way home. As she reached the door her mother asked : 'Why, Mabel, what has happened ?'

What was Mabel to do ? Tell all ? Tell the story in her own favour ? Tell nothing ? It is a case of conscience scarcely to be settled but by a Jesuit Father. Can Mabel tell the whole truth without giving her boy friend away ? Will not the prestige of the Sunday school committee be damaged in her mother's eyes if she reports the leader's loss of temper and consequent yielding to the temptation to say cross things ? The

whole scene is so sordid, so unsavoury, as a prelude to a worship service, that no authority under the Pope will convince me that Mabel had any honourable course open to her but to pick a quarrel with her mother immediately upon her return home, accuse her of repressing her individuality, rush upstairs to her bedroom, slam the door and lock it, and so create a situation in which attention would be diverted from the Sunday school. I find, however, that the girls of New York do not agree with me. Two hundred and thirty-two are in favour of Mabel's telling all, while a mere dozen counsel reticence.

Was this the same Mabel, I wonder, who was the central character in situation No. 82? I scarcely think so. The Mabel of No. 82 seems to me a more worldly Mabel, a Mabel potentially quarrelsome, but unlikely to choose a Sunday school committee meeting as the scene of her quarrels. Here are the few facts that history has to tell us about her :

The Bartons had a friend who thought himself a second Milton. He wrote reams of poetry, most of which was very poor. Mabel used to get him to read his poems to her and then nearly split her sides laughing at him. One evening she urged him to read some of his poems for a group of her young friends. They laughed aloud and hurt the poet's

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feelings. He left in high dudgeon. After the young people were all gone, Mrs. Barton asked Mabel what made their poet-friend leave so hastily. Mabel knew she was in for a scolding, but she told her mother all about it.

Was Mabel . . . wise—unwise ?

These real-life situations are extremely poignant, and, as regards this particular situation, Mabel cannot be held guiltless. On the other hand, there is a bright side to everything. She had rid the house of the second Milton, and everybody, while volubly scolding her, would be blessing her in their hearts. It seems to me that she should have resorted to evasion—that she should, for example, without exactly telling a lie, have led her mother to believe that the second Milton had been smoking a cigar that was too strong for him and had to hurry from the house. This would have biased the mother still more strongly against the second Milton, and have drawn the mother and the daughter closer together in sympathy, with the result that the confidential mother-daughter relationship would have been strengthened. The schoolgirls of New York did not think so, however. They voted for the whole truth and a scolding—which means a distressing quarrel between mother and daughter—by a majority of two hundred and seventy-three votes to twenty-eight.

The charming thing about those schoolgirls is that they seem to have answered all the questions, many of them extremely difficult, quite sincerely. As the author puts it, 'they respond freely and, in the main, sincerely, to the questionnaire method. If they exaggerate, it is for us to recognize the earmarks of the mirage of adolescent racing blood'. I have not myself a keen enough eye to detect the earmarks of the mirage in *Concerning Our Girls*. The American, it is obvious, has not inherited from Europe the hampering individualism expressed in the saying 'Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies.' The Englishman resents questions as an infringement of his liberty. He grinds his teeth at the questions that are asked him in his Income-tax form. He becomes apoplectic when the Census enumerator asks his housemaid how many rooms there are in his house, especially when, like a Wordsworthian child, she scorns the notion that the bathroom is not a room, and adds a room or two extra out of sheer boastfulness. Let him resign himself, however. The day of questions is only at the dawn. By the time the next Census comes round we shall undoubtedly have a Ministry of Psychology eager to tabulate all the facts about human conduct and the human mind that everybody knows already. The citizen will then have to reply in his Census form, not only to questions about his name, age, and occupation, or even

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the number of rooms in his house, but to such questions as: 'If you, as the citizen of a country in which it is illegal to sell lottery tickets, won the Irish Sweep, would you feel it your duty to offer the proceeds to a hospital that you knew had conscientious objections to accepting tainted money?' He may even find himself compelled, under a fifty-pound penalty, to solve such teasers as Life Situation No. 61 in *Concerning Our Girls*:

'Old Smedley was at church to-day and prayed. I really wonder if there is a God when I hear that old hypocrite pray. What does God do about such old guys, I wonder. I didn't say anything to mother this time because she'd be shocked again.'

Do you think she was right not to tell?
. . . No?—Yes?

There is no escaping from the fact that psychology is the science of the immediate future. Yet there can be no real psychology—statistical and tabulated psychology—while the psychologists are confined in their studies to a small minority of the human race, largely abnormal. What a wealth of knowledge lies within our reach if only our statesmen had the courage to pass a law instituting a universal psychological questionnaire, so that the domestic, social, civic, and occupational reactions of every man, woman,

and child may be marshalled in columns, set forth in tables, and summarized in graphs! If the results of such a questionnaire are ever published in volume form, we ought to know almost as much about human nature as Adam.

IX. Sleep ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩

DURING our infancy all the world is in a conspiracy to persuade us to sleep. During the rest of our lives all the world is in a conspiracy to persuade us to wake up. There is possibly a Marxian explanation of this extraordinary paradox, as there is a Marxian explanation of everything. It is reasonable to suppose that Capitalism, not having as yet been able to turn the energies of infants into economically remunerative channels, and realizing that infants by being awake were wasting the energies of adults who might have been more profitably employed, decreed that the young should be deafened into sleep with doggerel about cradles in the tree-tops. The extremely young have for thousands of years protested. They have wept at the harshness of a despotic system that stunned them into sleep with music in order to release older people for other employments than attending to the needs of babies. They have rebelled in the small hours. They have howled in their innocence for a twenty-four-hours day, till at last they fell asleep, not from obedience, but through exhaustion. Then, a few years later, just as they had grown accustomed to somnolence, and come to regard it not only as a

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pleasure but as a virtue, Capitalism began to see in them fledgling wage-slaves and, instead of 'Sleep, my pretty one', and such gentle incitements to lethargy, invented a new kind of nonsense about the voice of the sluggard, the busy bee, and the morning bright with rosy light. It was important, according to the capitalists, that the human being at an early age should acquire habits of industry, and, since there is no money in sleep, all the little Master Georges of the earth found to their consternation ruthless hands dragging them from their beds before it was yet light.

Human nature is, fortunately, so adaptable that in the course of time nine children out of ten accept this induction into servitude as a law of their existence. They leap from their beds with as mechanical a regularity as if they were figures on a clock. They begin even to imagine that they enjoy being up, and sit down to an eight o'clock breakfast with faces as bright as a May morning. Little do they dream what fate has in store for them—that, under a pitiless economic system, they will one day be expected not merely to rise early but to set out every morning and incarcerate themselves for the day in one of those prisons called offices or factories. If they but knew, would they not join the small band of rebels, who, even after infancy, heedless of the calls of their elders, wrap the bedclothes more closely round their shoulders when the

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hour for rising approaches? Perhaps they would not, for it takes courage to defy authority. The child who lies in bed beyond the conventional hour must be prepared to face vilification, misunderstanding, and even personal assault. He must be prepared to suffer for principle, for there is no real pleasure in lying in bed when the world that is up will not let you sleep. The child who lies in bed in the morning must have the courage to go on lying in bed while nurses drag the bedclothes off him, while brothers and sisters and cousins squeeze cold water from sponges over his face and ears, while threats of no breakfast are hurled at his dreaming head. There is every temptation to get up, indeed. Cowardice whispers, 'Awake.' Appetite counsels, 'Rise.' Self-interest urges, 'Obey.' Only the greatest resolution will enable a growing boy to resist this multiple pressure. St. Anthony was tempted severely, but I doubt if he was ever tempted so severely as the little sluggard whom everybody else is trying to entice out of his bed. If his will weakens even for an instant he is almost certain to cry out, 'Oh, anything for a quiet life!' and roll out of bed in search of his slippers. This is a tragedy that has happened at the outset of many a promising career.

It seemed to me lately that there were signs of a change in the common attitude to sleep—that science was coming into line with poetry

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in pronouncing sleep a good thing in itself. More than once in recent years I have read speeches by eminent doctors who attacked the notion that everybody should get up at the same time, and pointed out the fact that, if some people lie in bed longer than others, it is not because they are lazy, but because they need more sleep. Human beings are not all of a pattern, needing exactly the same amount of sleep, food, fresh air and exercise. They differ both in energy and in the manner in which they expend their energy. One man will do as much work in two hours as another will do in six, but he is not lazier because he has worked fewer hours. In the same way, we have no right to count it as a matter for moral reproach if one man sleeps a different number of hours from his neighbours. Consider for a moment what he is sacrificing. Most of us, during the happiest time of our lives, would, if it were possible, never go to sleep at all. Is it nothing to bring to an end those long conversations after midnight? Is it nothing to miss the first flush of dawn in June, when every bird and every flower are as if created afresh in the still air? I can assure the moralists that there is not an hour of the night or day that I have not grudged to sleep. It is Nature, not I, that craves for these continual bouts of unconsciousness. Even to-day, how often am I last at a party! It is my host, and not I, who yawns first. Yet

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when, under the compulsion of Nature, I submit to the deceptive chains of sleep, I find myself so fast bound that, when half the world is breakfasting, I cannot escape and join the company. I am Nature's prisoner. I would rather be reading poetry, or talking, or listening to talk, but Nature has me in her grip, and, so far as I can see, I am no more to be blamed than a man who has been unwillingly sent to jail.

Until recently I thought that the medical profession was coming round to my opinion on this point. I have just read a disillusioning article in a Sunday newspaper, however, in which the author, a specialist, throws overboard all the results of modern research and, in the best reactionary vein, suggests that sleep may easily become injurious and that no man has a right to sleep as long as I, for instance, think I need to sleep. He looks on sleep as a kind of drug, of which he would allow us only small quantities. He himself has reduced his hours of sleep from eight to six, and he declares that he feels all the better for this. His theory is that, if you restrict your sleep to four, five, or six hours, your sleep will become more concentrated than if you go on sleeping for eight or nine. Hence, the man who sleeps only four hours gets as much real sleep as the man who sleeps eight. 'The secret is that sleep is like meat extract; it can be taken concentrated in a spoon or diluted in a cup, and its value to the

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system is exactly the same in either case.' I wish I could be sure of this, for I should be delighted to be alive for twenty hours a day. But how can I reconcile this theory with the advice of a specialist (which I never took) to lie in bed for thirteen hours a day? I protested that even I could not sleep for thirteen hours, to which he replied that it mattered comparatively little whether I slept at all, and that the important thing was to lie down, whether asleep or awake. The writer in the Sunday paper, however, is like one of those people who tell you that the secret of long life is eating less, or drinking less, or smoking less. When the last Puritan has disappeared from the earth, the man of science will take his place as a killjoy, and we shall be given all the same old advice but for different reasons.

I confess that, with the New Year so close, I feel twinges of approaching Puritanism myself, and I am half inclined to give this short-sleep theory a trial. If I can get to bed early enough on New Year's Eve I will come down for eight o'clock breakfast on New Year's Day. Even the writer of the article does not pretend that I shall enjoy this. He does not promise that, if I rise early several mornings in succession, I shall not feel 'intolerably tired'. 'Only a lengthy experiment,' he declares, 'brings to light the secret of short sleep.' Well, at this distance, I am willing to undertake a lengthy

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experiment. I shall enjoy the novelty of it, and if I can keep it up through January and February, there ought to be little difficulty with the less dreadful months that succeed them. March may come in like a lion, but he will find me up and ready for him. I am conscious of a pleasant glow of heroism at the prospect. By May I should have cut another hour out of the night, and should have become the familiar of the waking thrushes. Unhappily, I am one of those who do everything to excess, and I doubt if I shall be able to stop when I have reduced my sleep to four hours. I foresee that about October I shall be scarcely going to bed at all, and that I shall become a burden to polite hosts and hostesses who will be unable to get rid of me. I shall become a despot in the home, calling on every one to get up as soon as the sun rises. For no human being believes that any other human being has a right to be in bed when he himself is up. Taking everything into consideration, I suspect that I shall become a general nuisance, and I have no doubt that, by the end of the year, my friends and relations will be praying for a return of the ancient somnolence. In fact, I am beginning to wonder whether it is quite fair to other people to make the lengthy experiment. Perhaps not. I shall in any case, not make up my mind finally till eight o'clock on the morning of the First of January.

X. Week-End



THE man who can live in London through the month of May without ever feeling tempted to escape into the country at the week-end is undoubtedly a man without a soul, but it is possible that he has a double portion of common sense. May is the perfect month in the imagination. It is the only month in which the nightingale may be heard every day and every night. The cuckoo has not yet changed its tune, prophesying the silence of summer. The woods are filled both with strange and with familiar voices. The young leaves on the trees, steeped in the sunshine and stirred by the gentle breeze—particularly the beech-leaves—are more beautiful than they will ever be again. There is a tide of flowers and the promise of a richer tide. Man treads the earth a released prisoner who has been given the freedom of an infinite garden, lighted during the day by a beneficent sun, lighted during the night by beneficent stars. Such is the May that all men know in their hearts. Such is the May in which they believe so determinedly that the experience of a lifetime is impotent to shake their faith that this, but for a highly improbable mischance, must May inevitably be. We laugh at the

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credulity of the Flat-Earthers, but it is nothing to the credulity of those who believe in the burning splendour of May. This is one of the many illusions that increase human happiness, but it bears no relation to common sense.

That there have been perfect Mays I will not deny, but I deny their inevitability. If I look back I seem to have heard the nightingale singing as often in a shower of sleet or hail or rain as on a balmy night when the moon of the poets was shining. None the less, I believe in the May of the poets, and every year I set out confidently to see it. Knowing the nightingale only through books till I was in my thirties, I now make a pious pilgrimage to hear it every spring, and, if I were prevented from doing so, I should imagine I was missing an event that transforms the earth. That this intense restlessness, this desire for the miraculous is common, is suggested by the fact that the Automobile Association now publishes a list of places where the nightingale may be heard, so that motorists may be able to gather by the wayside and listen rapturously from their cars. And, indeed, the nightingale moves the curiosity even of those who are in general indifferent to birds. The fact that it sings by night enchants the imagination, though if all the birds sang by night human beings would probably go out with guns and exterminate them. By what freak of nature the nightingale came to turn night into

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day and to disturb the quiet of the sleeping landscape I do not know ; but the result has been to make it a bird of mystery, unique, ravishing, legendary. The man who has never heard the nightingale feels that he has something to live for. It is the miraculous bird of the English spring.

I spent Saturday afternoon looking for a nightingale in Surrey. I set out along the bank of a stream in a deep and woody hollow, where a cool wind blew through the tops of the half-bare trees and where every warm spot that tempted one to sit down was infested with clouds of mosquitoes rising from the marshy ground. The modern English mosquito is a virulent insect esurient of the human ankle, of the human scalp. One might forgive it in a golden atmosphere of Italian warmth, but on a cool day in England it is infinitely exasperating, breeding dissatisfaction with the song of the willow-wren in the green leaves, with the white stars of the flowers in the grass, with the whole procession of the day. To come on the track of a badger's foot in the mud at the edge of the stream was very well in its way, but bitten ankles do not conduce to that wise passiveness without which it is impossible to lose oneself in the enjoyment of nature. I felt after the first bite that the day was going to be a failure, and, when I came to a wooded place beyond the stream, a strange silence reigned

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among the oaks and in the bushes, and the world was like a theatre in which the curtain had risen but the stage was bare of everything but scenery. There were nesting-holes in the trees, but no wood-pecker, nuthatch or even starling was in sight or hearing. In a thorn-bush a nightingale uttered one brief chuckle of song, and instantly fell silent. A marsh-tit flitted for a moment along the edge of a hanging birchwood, rich in bluebells, and disappeared. Chaffinch, thrush, and blackbird sang, but these are not the rarities of May, the returned prodigals from Africa, and may be heard even in a London garden. There are days on which it is exciting to see a hare but not a rabbit, exciting to see a butterfly orchis but not a common spotted orchis, and this was one of them. The true poet, no doubt, is content with a skylark, a robin, a daisy, or a lesser celandine, and, except in May, I am all for the poets in this matter. But in May and on a day borrowed from London, I must have rarities, the specialities of the season, as the advertisers say. On such a day the meanest flower that blows and the meanest bird that sings are to me merely symbols of hope frustrated, and a red-breasted flycatcher would outweigh a thousand chaffinches.

Hope did not die with the daylight, however, and it was very pleasant, though chilly, to lie on a withered heath after the sun had gone down and look across the valley, where a pond

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was still shining, to a distant line of hills clear against the evening sky. There was no sound on earth when the rabbit-shooter half a mile away ceased his work—no sound but the intermittent purr of a far-off motor-bicycle. Overhead a woodcock—or was it a snipe?—I am ignorant in these things—flew across the world, its long bill clearly silhouetted in the twilight. Silence again, as the green faded in the western horizon, till an owl, hidden in an oak, began to scold. There is something peculiarly attractive in the hooting of an owl under the first stars. Here, at least, is company in the stillness. Here the life of the night awakens. Is it a voice of disappointed hunger or of eager and triumphant appetite? This night it seemed expressive of contentment—the contentment of a wicked bird in an innocent world at peace. Then across the heath came the first faint spinning of a nightjar—a sound that, if it were made by an insect in a room, would probably be irritating, but that, since it is the song of an invisible bird in the solitude of the night, thrills the darkness with a curious ecstasy. But even the nightjar was disappointing, for it did not come out of its hiding to perform its strange nocturnal air-dances.

On the way down from the heath every bush was silent, and, where a year ago a nightingale was singing incessantly, there was now only the stirring of leaves in a cold wind. It seemed as if the nightingales must have at last learned

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wisdom and have absented themselves from a climate as deceitfully praised as the Riviera's in winter. Chilled and mosquito-bitten, I set off for the hotel, having discovered once more the disenchantment of an English May. I asked the landlord of the hotel whether nightingales had become scarcer in the neighbourhood. 'Scarcer?' he said. 'There seem to be more of them every year. I've never heard so many as this year. There's one sings every night on the other side of the road.' He took me to the door. 'You can't hear it now with all those cars passing. Yes. Listen. There it is. Turn to the right, round the corner past the tap-room door and you'll hear it better.' I walked past the tap-room door, and, across the road in a thicket of darkness, the perfect nightingale was unquestionably singing. It sang as though with double energy in the cold, sang with scarcely a pause except to give the greater effect to a half-expected yet always surprising turn in its song. As a car swung past with a blaze of light the bird would fall silent, but only for an instant, and would resume its flourishes in the darkness till the next motor-bicycle rattled by. I doubt, however, whether motor-cars and motor-bicycles with their noises and smells are the ideal accompaniment to the song of the nightingale. Could Keats have been moved to so profound a rapture if, as he listened to the nightingale, motor-bicycles had whizzed

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round the corner towards him at two-minute intervals and missed him at times only by inches ? Had he stood in such recurrent peril of being run into, would he have been transported into the mood to write :

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain ?

Darkling I listened, but I confess I had no such thoughts as these, and I doubt if the greatest ecstasy is possible to a man continuously in danger of being knocked down by a motor-bicycle. Still, it was a noble performance, and was well worth a forty-miles journey from London. I should have felt cheated if I had not heard it, and should have told myself that the tulips and the ducks in St. James's Park are far beyond anything that May has to offer in the countryside. And, as I lay awake hour after hour from the tingle of insect-bites, and the song of the nightingale came floating in through the bedroom window, I enjoyed a sense of achievement in which I could forgive even the mosquitos that were torturing me. There are country dwellers who detest the nightingale as a disturber of sleep, but for the townsman to lie in bed and listen to a nightingale singing is to feel that a dream has come true. And for a dream to come true during Buchan's cold spell is good fortune, indeed.

XI. The Rising Generation ♪ ♪

WHY the rising generation is this, that, or the other is a question that appears to have become increasingly absorbing in recent years. I do not know whether, when I myself was a member of the rising generation, my elders studied me closely as a type of something new, something on the whole regrettable, in the history of the human species. Did they confidently found generalizations on my most trivial actions? Did they, seeing me go pale at the approach of a mastiff, make a note of this and say: 'The rising generation is afraid of dogs'? Did they, on catching sight of my flying figure ten minutes late on my way to school, reflect sadly: 'The rising generation is slothful and undisciplined'? Did they, on seeing my red, white, and blue tie, worn as a symbol of my infant politics, murmur: 'The rising generation is loyal to the Empire'? If they did, they never told me so or wrote to the papers about it. They spoke to me always as an individual and never as the representative of all the boys and girls of my age. So little did they regard me as representative of my contemporaries that certain of my contemporaries were again and again held up to me

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as models worthy of imitation. Boys who stood up straight, who turned out their toes, who were tidy and unselfish and polite and punctual—these were of the same age as I, but I gathered that the difference between them and me was as wide as between childhood and grey hairs. And, when I look back, I find it impossible to invent a generalization that would convey any clear picture of the boys and girls I knew in those days. There were boys of fiery courage and timid boys, boys who learnt their lessons laboriously and boys who could never answer a question in class without the aid of a book secreted under the desk, boys so honest that they never forgot to pay back a borrowed penny and boys who robbed sweet-shops when the assistant's back was turned, boys who did what they were told and insubordinate boys who ran away to sea, boys who liked Sunday school and boys who hated it—human beings, in fact, with as great a variety of good and bad qualities as you will find in any country or in any generation.

Hence, when I read generalizations about modern youth, I sometimes wonder how far they are true of any particular young person now living. I felt like this when reading in a newspaper the other day a letter which began : ‘ The correspondence recently published in your columns discloses various reasons why the rising generation are unable to amuse themselves

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and require expensive forms of entertainment to keep themselves from boredom.' This seemed to me to be a somewhat reckless remark to make about the millions of different human beings who are grouped together as the rising generation. Is there the slightest reason to suppose that 'the rising generation are unable to amuse themselves'? So far as I have observed them, they appear to be able to amuse themselves with the most complete and occasionally alarming success. A ghost from the Victorian days, returning to earth, would notice many changes in society, but I doubt whether he would notice any decline in the capacity for amusement among the young. What has really changed, I imagine, is the attitude of both the young and of everybody else to amusement. There is a libellous picture of the Victorian age which represents it as steeped in materialistic Pecksniffery and hostile to laughter; but, though it is libellous, there is this small piece of truth in it, that amusements played a smaller part in the lives and thoughts of the Victorians than they play in the lives and thoughts of the Georgians. Among large sections of society various amusements, now generally accepted as harmless, were looked on with suspicion. There were many houses in which the appearance of a pack of cards would have created a parental brainstorm. There were others—but fewer—in which dancing was

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regarded with as much horror as Sabbath-breaking. Many human beings went through their teens without having ever been in a theatre or a music-hall. And thousands even of those who looked on theatres and cards and dancing as legitimate pastimes, were still sufficiently puritanical to feel alarm when any one began to show an exceptional liking for them. It was generally accepted that man was not sent into the world in order to be amused, and that, indeed, he possessed the right to be amused only in a limited measure. If a serious Victorian had foreseen the present universal reign of amusement, with its theatres, cinemas, dance-halls, wireless, football matches, and the rest of it, he would have thought of it as something resembling the conditions of the days before the Flood. For he would have foreseen a world in which the right to be amused up to the limit of one's income is taken for granted much more generally than in his own age. A much larger proportion of men and women nowadays insist upon the right to be happy as a first principle. The Victorian, no doubt, was as greedy of happiness as the Georgian is, but happiness to him was not in theory the chief end of man.

How far it has become so to a newer generation I have no means of judging. I myself, born in the Victorian age, have always, in the intervals of keeping pace with the income-tax

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collector and such enemies of pleasure, done everything in my power to secure such happiness as I could, and no Georgian could have laid more determined siege to happiness than I. At the same time, I have done this in contradiction of my principles. In principle I am no pleasure-seeker. In principle I am, to use a favourite Victorian word, partial to good works and self-abnegation. I hold, moreover, to the ancient theory that happiness comes for the most part to those who are searching for something else. Yet I go on searching for happiness. It is the eternal illusion even of those who (in theory) are disillusioned. Consequently, I cannot join with much vehemence in the attacks on what is called the modern craze for amusement.

As for these moderns, the writer in the newspaper suggests that, in spite of their strenuous efforts, they are very little amused after all. The rising generation, in his opinion, consists of young people who 'require expensive forms of entertainment to keep them from boredom'. Here, again, one wonders to how many of the rising generation this description applies. Is it really certain that boredom is commoner among the young than it was a hundred years ago? Millions of young people, I imagine, suffer from boredom in every generation, but in different generations they are bored in different ways. I myself as a child was bored by algebra, by Sunday school, and by having to read the

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newspaper aloud to my grandfather when I would rather have been eating gooseberries in the garden. There are men, such as Stevenson, who declare that they have never been bored in their lives, but a wet day in a seaside hotel can fill most of us with agonies of boredom. Intermittent boredom is, always has been, and always will be the common lot of man. You may meet it in the church or in the tavern, in solitude or in company. And it is essentially admirable, being the mark of a wild faith or hope that life has something better to offer than it is at present offering.

The members of the younger generation are, of course, indulging in a vain dream if they believe that they can escape boredom by means of 'expensive forms of entertainment'. They can do so, perhaps, if they are poor, because if one is poor champagne and a dance at a West End restaurant are as the release of Cinderella from her rags and ashes. Champagne is the perfect drink for those who cannot afford it; but, if you can afford it, what is it but an intoxicant that fails to intoxicate the imagination? Similarly, a poor bored man might forget his miseries on the Riviera, but the rich bored man will find there only the rich boring world he had left at home. Therefore, let the wealthier members of the younger generation not set too much store by expensive forms of entertainment. Let them rather, like Mr. Churchill, turn bricklayers,

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or take to good works, or give their money to those who would not be bored by it.

But that one youth or maiden in a hundred is depending on expensive forms of entertainment as a refuge from boredom I see no reason to believe. I suspect that the young still find in each other's company the chief of all entertainments, and that as large a proportion of them as ever obtain as much amusement in the course of a year as human beings have a right to expect. That there is something wrong with the younger generation, I know ; because there is bound to be something wrong with the younger generation. But what it is I am not sure. I suspect that their chief fault is that they have begun to make wild statements about the older generation. And the older generation, for its part, make equally wild statements about them. Making wild statements of this kind is an inexpensive form of entertainment suitable to human beings of both sexes and all ages, and it is, perhaps, the characteristic amusement of our time.

XII. The Tailor Orders His Tomb ☞

THE will of a tailor has just been the subject of a dispute in the Courts. He was a tailor who all his life had had 'a passion for saving money that amounted to a mania'. So great was his antipathy to spending that, when his wife died some years ago, he refused to pay—or even to contribute to—her funeral expenses. Prudent in some respects, imprudent in others, he had thirteen children, but he would not permit even so swarming a family to stand in the way of his habit of saving. The £3,400 that he left when he died was accumulated, we are told, 'at the expense of his wife and family, whom he systematically starved, over-worked or beat'. Living in recent years with two of his daughters, he compelled them to 'sleep on a broken couch while he had a proper bed'. He had by this time become blind, and had evidently begun to meditate on death. Having lived meanly all his life, he saw in the tomb an escape into a more magnificent existence. He had lived like a pauper; he would lie in his grave like an emperor. The miser chrysalis, at the last rattle of death, would be magically translated into a spendthrift butterfly. He had never been a friend to anybody, but he would now be generous

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to himself. In this determination, the blind old man sent for a neighbour and dictated his will.

Part of it ran as follows :

The funeral expenses to be fixed at £100, and to be in first-class style, with motor conveyances for same. Also I wish to have paid the sum of £2 to all my friends attending the funeral for their expenses incurred.

I leave £500 in order to have a first-class tombstone, a beautifully kept flower-bed, and an ornamented monument, preferably a broken column, with all necessary inscription on same.

Also a further sum of £400 for upkeep and beautifying of grave, tombstone, and monument for the space of thirty to forty years or more, and incidental expenses attached. This sum, £1,000, to be the first charge on the estate, and take precedence over all other allocations.

There is something suggestive of a noble ambition in these crabbed sentences. Here was a man who had never enjoyed anything first class in his life and who at length had a vision of going first class to Heaven. He had never, we may be sure, had a first-class meal, or travelled in a first-class compartment on the railway. It is almost certain that he had never stayed at a first-class hotel, or bought a stall at a theatre, or paid for a bottle of champagne, or disbursed

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a sixpence for a weekly paper. He had counted every halfpenny lost that was not saved, and an extra farthing on the price of the loaf must have weighed on him like the American debt. Possibly it was the realization that he was going where there is neither saving nor spending that convinced him in a flash that he might as well now for the first time and the last taste the deliciousness of spending. Or, perhaps, he may all his life have been hugging the secret glory of being housed well after death. What a change from his penurious home, with his two daughters lying on the broken couch ! In life he could not afford to buy a bunch of shabby chrysanthemums for the table ; as compensation he would sleep in death under a beautifully-kept flower-bed. And he would be borne to his flower-bed ' in first-class style ' with ' motor conveyances ' following after, the world standing still in admiration of the spectacle. It was a day for largesse, and he who had never spent two shillings on making anybody rejoice that he was alive was now prepared to pay two pounds to any one who mourned that he was dead.

But, if Scrooge was transformed by the prospect of death, he was still only half-converted. He was willing to spend money, but, though other people must have some of it, he remained human enough to wish to spend most of it on himself. In other words, he was what is called

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a 'good fellow'. He left a sum to charities, for to leave money to charity redounds more to a man's honour (in print) than to leave it, in the conventional fashion, to his family. But even the published announcement of a charitable bequest brings a man but fleeting glory in comparison with the endurance of stone and an epitaph well and truly graven. Hence the tailor, desiring to be columnarly extant, placed before charities the necessity of 'a first-class tombstone' with 'an ornamented monument, preferably a broken column, with all necessary inscription on same'. Beneath such ponderous splendour he could sleep with the smile of contentment—nay, of bliss—on his face for ever, the pathos of the broken column touching the exquisitive chord of self-pity, and the epitaph performing the first duty of an epitaph—to inform the world how much it lost in losing the ninth part of a man supine beneath. There are men who tremble with joy, like that of first love, at the prospect of shaking hands with a great author; there are others who are exalted skywards by an introduction to an Oxford or Cambridge Blue; there are more who perspire with delight on sitting beside a peer at table. But the tailor had a heart set above such melting vanities. His grandeur must be, not momentary, but perpetual. Stone that outlasts flesh and blood should proclaim his eminence even when he was a skeleton.

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And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade

—the tailor at least knew better than that. Equality may lay its blighting hand on the society of the living, but there can be no equality among monuments. If you have saved £3,000, your survival after death—in a graveyard—will be both more certain and more splendid than if you had died a pauper. The glories, not only of our blood and state, but of our banking accounts, are among the most substantial things on earth when transmuted into monumental stone.

To the philosopher the desire for lasting conspicuousness after death seems vanity, and if it were possible for us all to be philosophers I should agree that the desire is not one to be commended. But the omens do not suggest that, within any measurable period, the world will be populated by philosophers, and if a man's vanity lies in being conspicuous in a churchyard, I cannot see that it differs in any serious degree from the vanity that consists in being conspicuous on the platform, or in the City, or in any of the trades, professions, or pursuits of the living. Self-love rarely takes a more modest form than in the desire for an immodest burial. If men had always restricted their self-love to their monuments we should have been spared the disastrous egoisms of history—the wars of

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the conquerors and the wars of the conquered. We should have been spared the minor plague of self-advertisement that has broken out like a rash over the potentially fair face of democracy. If it were made a principle that no one should be allowed to advertise himself till he was safely stowed underground, what a purification of almost all branches of living would result ! And what economies ! We should all take to saving for our tombs, and, on fire with self-love, we should save till even Mr. Snowden was satisfied. And in time he and his successors would be able to tax our gravestones. There would be little left to tax. We should have given up all our vices but the vice of dying in style.

It may be thought that this is too optimistic a view of the matter, since the tailor made his tombstone an altar on which he sacrificed the happiness of his family. The tailor, I agree, did not confine his self-love to his splendour in the grave. He loved the absence of luxury in life as selfishly as other men love luxury. He was as ambitious of rule in his home as ever was a slave-owner of rule on his estate. There is nothing in his life that we need emulate except his posthumous self-love and self-advertisement. I confess I cannot rise to such heights of virtue as to ask nothing more of life than a broken column in the corner of a graveyard. My selfishness as a living animal is so much greater than my selfishness as a prospective skeleton that I

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am more concerned about where I shall dine next Tuesday than about where I shall lie in earth till my skull is rotted from my bones. To sacrifice to-day to to-morrow—is that not the rule of all good moralists and most good economists ? I, alas ! never could do it. The tailor, in a measure, could and did.

XIII. Is There Room ? ♪ ♪ ♪

THERE are, it is said, two hundred thousand foreign visitors coming to England this summer. Strange to say, this is generally regarded as good news. No voice, even among the anti-dumpers, has been raised in protest against this dumping of humanity on coasts that, during the holiday season, are already overcrowded. Men who would put the country into a turmoil in order to keep out a pound of Czechoslovakian sugar see no peril in the intrusion of a thousand living Czechoslovakians into the congested boarding-houses of Margate. Even the Empire Crusader is prepared to welcome a French or German tourist with scarcely less heartiness than if he were from the Fiji Islands. And, in the result, we may find England, that has so successfully repelled the foreign invader since the reign of William the Conqueror, converted into a vast playground for idle and inquisitive Europeans.

Until comparatively recently England had an enormous genius for isolation. Realizing that the only means of making holidays enjoyable in her bays and villages was to have them visited by as few people as possible, she spread through the world a legend of mists and foul

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weather sufficient to daunt every prospective foreign holiday-maker unless he were of the type that explores jungles and takes a positive pleasure in marching knee-deep in mud for a week at a time. She also conceived the brilliant idea of establishing a multitude of hotels in which the charges were made as high as possible and the food as bad and as monotonous as possible. As if this were not enough, she skilfully propagated the myth of the English Sunday, conveying such a picture of killjoy gloom that the ordinary foreigner would naturally have preferred to spend the day in prison. As moths are attracted to the flame, however, so are many human beings attracted to horrors, and, in spite of all that was done, more and more foreigners made their way to English shores. The English did their best to frighten them away by publishing long and sensational accounts of desperate Channel crossings, each worse than the previous one, and the mildest of them reminiscent of the weather that scattered the Spanish Armada; but still the foreigners came. Then, taking advantage of the war, England played her master-stroke. She altered the licensing laws in such a fashion that no foreigner could possibly know at what hour he was permitted to drink outside his hotel, making it illegal to drink beer in the Strand at an hour at which it is legal to drink it in Fleet Street, and illegal to call for a bottle of cider on

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the north side of Oxford Street at a time at which it would be legal to order a bottle of port on the south side. It was thought that by this means every foreigner who was not a fanatical teetotaller—and few foreigners were supposed to be teetotallers—would be so exasperated by his continually thwarted search for drink during his first visit that he would return home, determined never to visit such a land of unreason again, and to warn his friends and relations against spending their holidays in a country that went dry and wet by turns during the afternoon in obedience to a crazy clock.

These steps, it should be said, were not taken because of any particular malice against foreigners. The root of the trouble was that the most beautiful parts of England were already overcrowded during the holidays by the English themselves. Every year a charming beach that middle-aged men could remember as a blissful solitude in summer would be encroached upon by yet another row of bathing-tents, and invaded by yet thicker locust-swarms of children. Every year narrow country lanes that once wound their way through the week in a continual Sabbath idleness resounded with the roar of an extra charabanc. Every year, hills on which an Englishman could once sit and gaze for hours at a landscape uninfested by another visitor were overspread with a deeper carpet

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of litter and made hideous with the most hideous of all noises—the conversation and laughter of other people enjoying themselves in the same retired spot as oneself. The cry went up that England was being spoiled. No sooner did any foolish man praise in writing or in speech some beautiful spot that was still unspoiled by trippers than a host of trippers immediately proceeded to spoil it. Authors wrote for pay books and articles on unknown England, and charabancs rushed to the scene, with a megaphonist to expound the beauties of the unknown to the occupants. How many middle-aged men can return to-day to what was once their favourite retreat in England without seeing signs of the desolation wrought by other people ? Other people's motor-cars, other people's bungalows—is there a single English county free from them ? If there is, do not let even your dearest friend know, or it will not be free for long.

In view of these facts, it can scarcely be said that, in attempting to keep out the foreign visitor, the English were guilty of a merely anti-foreign bias. The ordinary Englishman was just as eager to warn off other Englishmen from his ideal resort as to warn off foreigners. In the little uninhabited bay in which he and his family had enjoyed the peace of August after August, he regarded every other human being, whether English or alien, as an intruder.

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Hence the great English plan for driving as many as possible of the English themselves abroad. Vast organizations were created for sending English men and women on tours all over the continent. The glories of the Swiss mountains, the wonders of the Italian lakes, the blue of the Mediterranean, the long sands of Le Touquet, were painted in such colours as to make Torquay appear but a slum, and Gloucestershire no more than a vegetable-garden in comparison. The Englishman was also lured abroad by tales of foreign cooking that would have made the mouth even of a dyspeptic water. And so docile is the Englishman that, when he obediently went abroad and was served with the worst meal that the worst cook in Dieppe could invent out of a diseased imagination, he would turn enthusiastically to his wife and say that he had always said that the French were the most wonderful cooks on earth. As for the wine, a bottle of claret that he would have poured down the sink in England would throw him into ecstasies in France. He would say to his wife that he had always said that you had to go to France to taste French wine at its best. I am not suggesting that French cooking and French wine are, when good, less than incomparable. But I have seen English men and women enjoying bad food and bad wine in a French hotel with as much gusto as if they had been supping with the

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gods in Paradise. This, I think, is a beneficent illusion and should be kept up. Otherwise how can Clacton and Skegness be saved from being overcrowded ? Every method should be considered legitimate by which holiday-makers can be enticed away from the English holiday resorts during the summer months. I do not write as a curmudgeon, but I like to have a beach to myself and a few friends, and, unless the great majority of holiday-makers go abroad in the summer, there are not enough beaches in England, or in these islands indeed, to go round the multitude of people who share my tastes. Hence, if I had time, I would write a series of books called *Unknown France*, *Unknown Italy*, *Unknown Germany*, and so forth, pointing out to the solitude-seeking Englishman the delights of Nice and Wimereux and Naples and the Rhine. The ideal English summer for the holiday-maker would be a summer in which the great tourist organizations would export nine-tenths of the inhabitants of England to the Continent.

The economists, I know, will be against me. With the economists it is all money-making. The economist would not care if Cornwall were as thickly packed with trippers and tourists during the summer as Epsom Downs are with racegoers on Derby Day. He would see in those crowds evidence only of financial prosperity. Hence, he is necessarily in sympathy

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with the pernicious invitation, addressed to Englishmen and foreigners alike : ' Spend Your Holidays in England.' This is simply playing into the hands of hotel-keepers, railway companies, and motor-coach agencies. To all these trades I wish well, but only to a point at which their interests do not threaten the amenities of country and seaside life. Not being an economist, I can take a large and unselfish view of the matter, and my sole purpose is to save Wiltshire, to save Dartmoor, and to save Cornwall from being overrun. It ought to be fairly easy to discover how many people it takes to overrun a place, and, having discovered this, to frame a law forbidding more than the right number of persons to visit any country, moor, harbour-town, or cove during the summer months. I myself could without difficulty fix the number of people who should be allowed to visit St. Ives during August. It is exactly the number that visited it in the first August in which I saw it. Then St. Ives was unspoiled. Now it is overrun. So is every place else that I once knew, except—— But that is a name that wild horses will not drag out of me.

XIV. In Praise of Sweepstakes

THERE are, it must be confessed, comparatively few things on which to congratulate ourselves in the present state of the human race. Depressing clouds hang persistently above the horizon. Problems, instead of coming nearer solution, seem to recede farther from it every day. The international situation is dangerous. The domestic situation gives cause for anxiety. Cynicism is growing, faith declining. An eminent dean assures us that it will be all right in a thousand years, but a thousand years is a long time to wait. It is little wonder that many people, contemplating the future, see no escape from despair but in indifference.

Yet one ray of sunshine has recently broken through the gloom, and made it possible to believe that the human race is not just yet going to resign itself either to indifference or to despair. With the Irish Sweepstake on the Derby a wave of hope swept over the civilized world. It has now spent itself, and several millions of people have lost not only their money but their prospects of making a fortune. Yet, instead of repining, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of them have

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taken their losses with a smiling countenance, and have squared their jaws in a firm determination to try for a prize in the next sweep. You cannot defeat a people of so dauntless a courage as this. Here, at least, is one field on which men fall to rise, are baffled to fight better. If the human race were half as optimistic about the League of Nations as it is about the great sweepstakes we should be able to settle down into a perpetual summer of peace.

A number of moralists, though not all, condemn lotteries and refuse to see anything noble in the passion of the ordinary gambler. They judge gambling, as some atheists judge religion, by its excesses, and denounce the innocent because of the peccant minority. They invent specious arguments to support their case, such as that it is wrong to hope to get something for nothing, as though even good men had not nursed this hope since the beginning of the world. Who is there who would not like to be left a fortune? Who is there who does not wish that his shares would rise in value without any effort on his part? To buy a ticket in a sweepstake is merely to buy a chance of obtaining what everybody wants, and, incidentally, to help other people to obtain it. There is, indeed, no finer model of unselfishness than the betting man and the purchaser of sweepstake tickets. For generations the betting men of England have been clothing the

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wives and children of the bookmakers. It may be said that this is not the object of betting ; yet every intelligent man who bets knows that it is the result. Our fathers and grandfathers have told us that we cannot make money by betting, and we know from experience that our fathers and grandfathers were right. To make money on horseracing is for the ordinary man more difficult than to make money in any trade or profession. This is a fact so generally understood that apart from a few persons, no man out of his teens can bet on horses without knowing that he is much more likely to enrich a bookmaker than to enrich himself. Yet the human race continues to bet and bookmakers to flourish. In such a world altruism cannot be said to be dead.

As regards the Irish Sweepstake, who can doubt the altruism of those who purchase tickets in it ? We are reproached in letters to the Press for our hypocrisy in pretending that we purchase these tickets in order to help the hospitals, and, no doubt, we have other motives as well. But we do at least happen incidentally to benefit the hospitals. If we do these excellent institutions a good turn, why inquire microscopically into our motives ? How pleasant it is to know that, while enjoying oneself, one is not only doing nobody else any harm but is actually, even if unintentionally, doing one's fellow-creatures good ! And, while helping the

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hospitals, we are also making thousands of other people happy by providing them with prizes ranging from £25 to £30,000. The knowledge that we are doing so does more than anything else to console those of us who fail to draw a prize in a sweepstake. Who of us can read without the light of joy in his eyes stories of dustmen and dethroned kings grown suddenly rich? Which of us grudged his particular ten shillings to the Italian ice-cream merchant who found himself at once the favourite and the victim of fortune? It is said that we envy the prize-winners, and we do, but there is no malice in our envy. And, anyhow, we have helped to make them happy.

We have also, it should be added, succeeded in making ourselves happy, though we should have been still happier if we had won a fortune. Still, the next best thing to a fortune is the chance of a fortune, and we possessed that for several weeks. Some of us possessed it hopefully, some of us philosophically. A great poet told me that he was absolutely certain that he would win a prize; but great poets have mighty imaginations. My own imagination in respect to lotteries is weak. Even though not long ago I opened a fortune-telling birthday-book and read under the date of my birthday the legend: 'You will have a surprise about money,' I could not feel absolutely confident that I would draw 'Cameronian' in

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the sweep. I felt a little more confident than I should otherwise have done, but my feeling was nearer faint hope than certainty. A palmist told me many years ago that I should have to work for my living, and one cannot escape from one's doom. Still, there is always a chance—a remote chance—that fortune will change, and this chance I count well worth ten shillings. To purchase a ticket in a lottery, indeed, is to buy a kind of fiction in which oneself is the hero. It is to see oneself, in one's mind's eye, happy and rich, free from all the cares and anxieties involved in earning a living, able to buy a cottage in the country, to take as long a holiday as one wishes, and so forth. It may not be the most heroic of ideals, but it is among the most innocent. It is not avarice, for avarice is the love of money apart from what it will buy, and most of us, in our sweepstake dreams, mean to spend the money. Besides this, the desire for money won without labour does not exclude dreams of a nobler kind. It might even be maintained that any one who longs to lead a nobler life should wish to obtain money without labour so that he may be released from the material struggle for gain and be able to devote himself to loftier pursuits than money-getting. I often think how much more time I should have had to become a better man if I had been born to a fortune. Getting and spending we lay waste

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our powers, says Wordsworth, and getting wastes even more of our powers than spending. Day after day, hour after hour, goes wastefully by in the effort to provide our families and ourselves with the necessities of existence. This is surely a lamentable state of affairs. It turns most of us inevitably into materialists. Let one of us win a first prize in a sweepstake, however, and he will have time to sit down and read the philosophers. He may even have time to become a philosopher.

But I do not wish to over-emphasize the moral value of sweepstakes. I should be content to rest their claims on the addition they make to the general stock of harmless pleasure. The whole business has been described as a craze, but is there anything crazy in wanting to be rich? Is every one who succeeds in business to be looked on as a madman? Were all the great houses of England built by lunatics? If we are crazy in wishing to make our fortunes, we are crazy in good company. Samuel Smiles would surely not have looked askance at our dogged persistence in our efforts. One would gather from some of the denunciations of sweepstakes, however, that the ordinary human being, having bought a ticket, is able to think of nothing else till the draw is over. The milkman forgets to deliver the milk, the postman drops the letters into the wrong boxes, the clergyman

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preaches an unintelligible sermon, the barrister loses his case through not having studied his brief, the waitress brings poached eggs instead of fried—all because everybody has gone crazy with the dream of winning a fortune. It is a pretty picture, but unlike life. Strange as it may seem, all of us went on with our work as usual. If our conversation and thoughts were trivial, they were no more trivial than before. We played a game, and it took less time than cricket—a game, it seems to me, far more becoming to a serious-minded man than bridge or even bezique. We played a game and we lost, and we do not care. We will try again the next time, if the police will let us.

I wish those who abuse lotteries would read Charles Lamb's essay on the subject, *The Illustrious Defunct*. Lamb can scarcely be regarded as an apostle of the vices, and here he paints an entrancing picture of the Paradise—the Fools' Paradise, if you like—that owes its existence to lotteries. He shows how, even under the bitterest disappointments the ticket-holder is a gainer by his dreams. He tells of a man who, in passing along Cheapside, saw the number 1069—the number of his ticket—posted as the winner in the window of a lottery office. Elated by his triumph and by the knowledge that he was now the possessor of £20,000, he decided to walk round St. Paul's in order to consider how he should break the

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nerve-shattering news to his family. After his walk round the cathedral, he returned to the shop and discovered that the number had been changed to 10069, and, going inside, was told that a clerk had made a mistake in announcing the earlier number. 'This,' says Lamb, 'effectively calmed his agitation, but he always speaks of himself as having once possessed £20,000, and maintains that his ten minutes' walk round St. Paul's was worth ten times the purchase-money of his ticket.' I doubt if I myself could have drawn good out of evil in this fashion, but even poor men to whom ten shillings is a sum that has to be saved in sixpences have told me that they and their families, though not winning a prize, find a ticket in a sweepstake well worth the purchase-money. To be rich in our dreams is the only kind of riches most of us are ever likely to possess. Who, without a twinge of conscience, could grudge toiling mortals this handful of fairy gold ?

XV. Golden Wedding ~ ~ ~

MR. AND MRS. JOHN DUNK, of the Post Office, Upper Dicker, Sussex, have it is reported in the Press, celebrated their golden wedding, and—what is more remarkable than this—Mrs. Dunk is the fourth daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. George Goschen, of Wilmington, to celebrate a golden wedding. The same newspapers that contained this announcement published the story of a German ‘Jack the Ripper’ who had confessed to having murdered a number of women and children in a particularly fiendish fashion. If we can judge by the different amounts of space devoted in the Press to the two items, the human race takes a hundred times more interest in the story of a monster’s having murdered half a dozen women and children than in the news that four members of a single family married and lived happily ever after.

I have met people who are so horrified by crime that they cannot bear even to read about it, and who blame the newspapers and the novelists for giving it so much prominence. But in this matter the newspapers and the novelists are the servants of the public, and the public has only to show an unmistakable

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preference for golden weddings in order to bring about the relegation of crime to obscure paragraphs. The more civilized men become, however, the more they seem to be interested in crime and misery. I know some highly-civilized people who cannot bear to read a story about a happy marriage. If you gave them a novel about a husband and wife who had won the Dunmow Flitch they would say: 'This sentimentality makes me sick.' Show them, however, a novel about a woman who as a child was tortured by her mother, and who afterwards compensates herself by making life a hell for her husband, and their bosoms glow with enthusiasm. 'This,' they say, 'is life—life stripped of its make-believe. Here is a novelist who faces the facts.' The most eminent fact of life is, apparently, that everybody who is worth anything is miserable, that only the most contemptible imbeciles could possibly love each other without disaster, and that laughter is for the most part an irritating noise made by shallow and unimaginative people.

It is only a small minority, of course, who rejoice so extremely in the spectacle of misery, and their attitude may, perhaps, be explained as a reaction against that of certain other extremists who, while revelling in the reports of gruesome murder trials, will nevertheless dismiss the tragedies of Shakespeare and the last novels of

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Hardy as too gloomy for an evening's entertainment. Many of the latter will read every word they can about a murderer who dismembered his victim and left the pieces in the luggage office at a railway station, and at the same time will denounce as depressing a novel or play that contains a situation not a quarter so hideous. By a curious paradox, it is mostly the same people who are avid readers of the reports of murder trials who loathe unhappy endings in fiction. They would reject *Jude the Obscure* on the plea that they liked something bright, and by 'something bright' they would imagine they meant something free from depressing associations. But their interest in crime suggests that they do not mean this at all. What they really mean is that they prefer something that calls for the least possible intellectual effort, whether it be a revue or the evidence at a trial for murder. The unpopularity of Ibsen in the English theatre is not due to his morbidity so much as to the fact that the majority of theatre-goers are unwilling to make the effort necessary to the enjoyment of his plays.

Thus the lowbrow and the highbrow have little excuse for charging each other with the love of the morbid. Each of them is morbid, though in a different fashion. Each of them would leave unread a paragraph about a golden wedding in order to read a story about a princess who had thrown plates at her husband and then run away

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from him. Each of them has an unappeasable appetite for horrors, disasters, fights, quarrels, and all the varied mishaps that befall human beings.

Can it be that the general taste for reading about miserable events is a proof that human beings are, on the whole, not miserable? Or that happiness is so common that most of us enjoy a holiday from ordinary life in reading about those who are unhappy? It would be pleasant to think so; and there is no doubt, for example, that a generation that is itself not enduring the miseries of war is more eager to read about these miseries than a generation that is enduring them. We need to be detached from the greatest miseries to some degree in order to take imaginative pleasure in them. Mutinies, famines, and fires that burn down cities can give the reader in his arm-chair a pleasure unknown to those who suffered them. The incidents of the Great Plague itself give us what is undeniably pleasure as we read about them in Pepys. Nobody could care for history who could not enjoy reading about miseries. History has often been described as the record of human folly and wretchedness; yet this does not prevent it from being one of the most delightful branches of literature.

Possibly, the attractiveness of the disastrous and the horrible is due to the fact that they excite our curiosity more than the smooth and

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placid stretches of existence. The christening of a king's son may be a more charming event than a bullfight, but many of us would prefer to read a description of the bullfight. I am not sure that, if I were offered a ticket for either of the two occasions, I should not choose the bullfight. It is not that I should expect to enjoy it—at least, not altogether—any more than I enjoy reading the details of the German 'Jack the Ripper' murders. But, whereas the notion of a christening stirs my curiosity only mildly, I feel an intense curiosity as to what a bullfight looks like and as to the sort of pleasure it has given generation after generation of men and women. I am glad that cockfighting is forbidden, but, if cockfights were still permitted, I should almost certainly go to see one. I remember hearing a discussion in which a number of men and women argued whether, if murderers were still executed in public, they would go to see the executions, as their ancestors did. Most of those present said 'No'; but every writer in the company declared that he would attend at least one execution, and a great novelist affirmed that he would regard it as a duty to do so. There was, so far as I could see, no dividing line of humanity between those who said 'Yes' and those who said 'No'. The difference was merely one of curiosity. That curiosity, like other passions can be carried to morbid and odious extremes, is obvious enough, and there

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are necessary limits to the curiosity even of the man of science, as we can see if we imagine a man of science getting hold of a fellow-human being and experimenting on him in order to test his nervous responses to all manner of pains and tortures. At the same time, if something horrible already exists and will continue to exist, however ardently we wish we could prevent it, there is, as a rule, some justification, either on scientific or on artistic grounds, for the curiosity of those who wish to observe it. Thus, most people who care for birds feel a longing to rescue the song-bird they see in the grip of a hawk; yet most of them also, knowing that song-birds are captured by hawks, have a curious desire to witness one such capture taking place. I am still old-fashioned enough to doubt whether it is right to show the cruelties of nature on the films, as when the lion crushes the antelope in its jaws in *Trader Horn*. But this is illogical. The thing happens, and, in the jungle, if I were not afraid of lions, I should wish to be there at the moment at which it happened. One is curious to see life at its most dramatic crises. There are men so curious that they would experience the pleasures of disinterested curiosity if they were privileged to witness the end of the world.

It may be that it is only the lower ranges of our curiosity that are so overwhelmingly fascinated by disaster. It is conceivable that the

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wise man, while accepting the sensational as an essential part of nature, would turn from it with profounder interest to quieter and more beneficent streams of events. Might he not find the thought of Chicago as a garden city infinitely more exciting than tales of Mr. Capone and the gangsters? Such a man might even have taken more interest in the Greeks and the Trojans, if on the first day of the landing, the leaders on both sides had shaken each other by the hand and the Greeks had gone home with an invitation to return the following summer with their wives and children. But, if that is the philosophic attitude to life, it is not the attitude of ordinary human nature. What we ordinary human beings still feel—though we may feel it with somewhat less confidence than formerly—is that peace, like golden weddings, is a flat affair to read about compared with the wickednesses of mankind.

XVI. Annoying, in a Way ♪ ♪

AT the end of an extremely interesting interview, Mr. J. W. N. Sullivan put an unexpected question to Sir Arthur Eddington. They had been talking about the effect of great rewards, whether in fame or in money, on men of science, when Mr. Sullivan asked : ‘ And what about the distribution of rewards in the world outside science ? For instance, the newspaper boosting of mediocrities, the sham reputations, and so on. Does that annoy you ? ’ The question obviously lay farther outside the thoughts of Sir Arthur than the farthest star known to his instruments, and we can discern a certain puzzlement in his answer. ‘ I’m afraid,’ he said, ‘ that is not my subject. I suppose my reaction to that sort of thing is very much the reaction of any other educated person. I suppose it *is* annoying, in a way. But no, I’m afraid I don’t think much about it.’

At the same time, the question is one that is worth trying to answer. It is a question that has been perplexing the minds of men ever since an ancient writer announced that he had seen the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree, and it was probably perplexing them before that. Mr. Sullivan, like many contemporary critics,

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seems to believe that the 'boosting' of mediocrities is something new and attributable to the newspapers; but there were sham reputations hundreds of years before there were newspapers, and it is doubtful whether it is easier for a mediocrity to get to the top to-day than it was in the days of the Punic Wars. The newspapers reflect a human nature that would still have existed if there had been no newspapers. And one of the permanent characteristics of human nature is its readiness to be deceived by what is second best. The great and good men of the pre-newspaper era were treated considerably worse by their fellow-men than great and good men are treated to-day. It was not a newspaper-reading age that compelled Socrates to drink hemlock; if Socrates were living to-day, he would be the idol of the Press and could obtain any sum he pleased for writing on any subject he pleased, from the League of Nations to the ethics of mixed bathing. I do not say that this improvement—if it is an improvement—is due to the newspapers. I wish only to emphasize the fact that the unjust distribution of fame and other rewards is not a modern phenomenon for which the Press can be called to account.

It is an immemorial injustice. As long ago as the fourth century before Christ, Aristotle was asking himself what attitude a good man should adopt to the unmerited good fortune of his neighbours. He came to the conclusion that,

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while it is the mark of a jealous man to feel pained by the good fortune of others, whether deserved or undeserved, a good man may legitimately feel righteous indignation when he sees good fortune attending those who do not deserve it. In other words, he found the unjust distribution of rewards 'annoying, in a way', just as many men find it in our own time. Hazlitt, always ill-rewarded, was conscious of similar feelings of annoyance at the flourishing condition of the green bay-tree, and he attempted to justify our envy of those who are luckier than ourselves through no merit of their own. 'Envy,' he declared, 'among other ingredients, has a mixture of the love of justice in it. We are more angry at undeserved than at deserved good fortune.' Hazlitt knew a great deal about human nature, but I think that on this occasion he deceived himself. It is true that we enjoy expressing our envy of others more if we can persuade ourselves that their good fortune is unmerited. But, as soon as we feel envious, we can easily persuade ourselves of this. Envy has so little of the love of justice in it that it is the most unjust of all the passions. It can convince us that a good man is a hypocrite and a man of genius an impostor. In such circumstances it is better to realize that we are envious than to pretend to ourselves that we are burning with righteous indignation.

Righteous indignation, indeed, should be

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reserved for rare occasions. The possession of fame or money by some one who does not deserve it is too trivial a matter for the exercise of this disinterested passion. If, however, the possession of fame or fortune makes a mediocrity a source of general danger—gives him power, say, to mislead the judgments of men—then comes the righteously indignant man's chance. If such an evangelist as Elmer Gantry existed, for example, it would scarcely be possible to feel too much righteous indignation. But the object of our indignation would not be his success or his fame. It would be the misuse of his power over the minds of men and women, his blackguardism, and his corruption. In the same way we should feel righteous indignation against a man who had undeservedly become rich, only if he misused his riches in such a way as to injure other people. We are not moved to righteous indignation when we hear that a man has won the Calcutta Sweep, though this is a piece of undeserved good fortune, but we should be so if we heard that he was using the money to finance a gang of dope-sellers.

Thus, fame and good fortune, however undeserved, can never in themselves be the object of righteous indignation. The Socialist may feel indignant at a state of society that distributes its rewards so unequally, but it would be unreasonable to concentrate righteous indignation on an individual member of such a society who had grown rich as the result of a lucky

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speculation. As for the fame, or notoriety, of mediocrities, why should we fret our hearts about it? Fame and money are desirable things, but, according to the philosophers, enough of them is as good as too much, and the man who is able to pay his bills will only make himself miserable if he keeps comparing his lot with that of others who are still more fortunate. It is a commonplace that the poor man who feels no envy is happier than the rich man who envies the man who is still richer. We all know this, yet envy remains the plague of the world. It has even been elevated into a principle in politics, and idealism itself at times becomes infected with it. Sometimes it is called the inferiority complex. The chief result of it is to make life still more unbearable to those who find it scarcely bearable already.

Hence, it seems more sensible not to be overmuch perturbed about the triumph of mediocrity. After all, the ordinary mediocrity, however much he may be 'boosted', does comparatively little harm. The really dangerous men are men of genius who teach false doctrine. And who these men of genius are none of us can tell for certain. Some people regard the opinions of Dean Inge as poisonous; others say the same of the opinions of Mr. Bertrand Russell. I have heard Mr. Shaw, Mr. Belloc, and D. H. Lawrence all assailed as misleaders of the people. I have my own opinion as to which of them, if any, has got hold of the truth, and I regard some of them

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as being far more dangerous to society than any mediocrities with sham reputations. But even here there is no occasion for righteous indignation, since each of them is a sincere and public-spirited writer, who, from the point of view of an impartial spectator, is just as likely to be right as I, who am not even sure that I am right. If there is anything to cause the human race particular concern in any age it is not the existence of the man of genius with wrong opinions, but the non-existence of the still more energetic man of genius with right ones.

I am not suggesting that the man with a sham reputation should not be exposed when the occasion arrives. Let us expose all the impostors on earth if we can, but, as a rule, this can be done without a display of moral fury. Let us cheerfully recognize the fact that if we destroy one sham reputation it will be succeeded by another—all of which is annoying, in a way, but not too annoying to be endured. We have seen scores of sham reputations appearing and disappearing in our own generation. And, meanwhile, I am prepared to admit, the world has in many respects grown worse. But who has made it so? The men with sham reputations? I doubt it. I am not absolutely sure, but I suspect that the men of genius, the men with well-deserved reputations and fortunes, will be discovered by posterity to have been the villains of the piece.

XVII. Experiences To Look Back On

AN article entitled 'Great Nights of Musical Comedy', which Mr. Joe Coyne recently contributed to a newspaper, has drawn an enthusiastic letter from a lady. 'How many,' she asks, recalling one of the nights referred to by Mr. Coyne, 'of those who had the great privilege to be one of the audience on that last memorable night of the production of *The Merry Widow* have kept, as I have done, the programme of the galaxy of stars? In the long years since,' she adds, with an almost audible sigh of sentimental reminiscence, 'I have often re-read and re-lived that wonderful night.' I cannot say from memory how long it is since the last night of the original run of *The Merry Widow*; but I know that it preceded the Great War. Much has happened since then. Civilization has tottered; empires have disappeared; the map of the world has been re-drawn with a pen dipped in blood. Yet, through all the intervening years, the wonder of that farewell performance burns brightly in retrospect for at least one member of the human race. A faded programme has but to be taken out of the drawer, and Paradise is regained. The darkness of the present all but ceases to be, as it is

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illuminated by that galaxy of stars from the past.

To an entirely reasonable man, sentimentality of this kind may appear trivial. He may regard it even as a sign of incapacity to distinguish between what in human experience is worth treasuring in the memory and what is not. Obviously, the lady who wrote the letter is deeply moved by the memory of that wonderful night in the theatre, and, equally obviously, no great philosopher could be so moved. I doubt if any great philosopher has ever preserved a theatrical programme since the dawn of thought. Antiquaries and historians of the theatre may do so, but they are as likely to preserve the programme of a play that has bored them as of a play that has delighted them. Programmes are not for them sentimental mementoes : they are parts of a collection.

Not being a great philosopher myself, I have an initial instinct to preserve programmes and such things. As a boy I never left my programme behind in the theatre. I invariably took it home as though it were worth preserving, and, if in the end it was thrown out, it was never thrown out by me. It was the same with programmes of concerts, of cattle shows, of regattas. I should have felt that in throwing away the programme I was throwing away something that in some mysterious way prolonged the experience I had enjoyed. Even to-day I find it

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difficult to get rid of programmes deliberately. I hate parting too soon with the match-card after a Test Match or with the race-card after a race meeting. I hoard—for a few days—tickets of admission to great events. The last time I was at a horse show the catalogue I bought was as large as a Family Bible, but I bore it home with me, and it was with reluctance that I consented after days of argument to allow it to be dropped into the waste-paper basket by less reverent hands. I am sure that, if my pockets were infinitely capacious, if clothes lasted for ever, and if I were a man of boundless strength, I should at the present moment be carrying about with me the programme or card of every play, concert, football match, cricket match, race meeting, circus, horse show, cattle show, pigeon show, motor show, flower show, political meeting, Sunday school soirée, and public funeral at which I was ever present. The only thing of the kind that I have never preserved is the menu of a banquet. This may be taken as a mark of indifference to food, but is more probably to be attributed to the feeling one usually has at the end of a banquet that one has had enough of it.

Even if I had succeeded in preserving all the waste paper that I began to preserve during all these years, however, I doubt if I should ever have made the same sentimental use of it that the lady makes of *The Merry Widow* programme.

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In the first place, I should not have known where to find any particular paper at any particular moment. A tender recollection of a beautiful actress seen more than thirty years ago from the corner of the gallery might set me rummaging in search of the programme of a musical comedy ; but it is a hundred to one that, instead of this, I should come upon the programme of a cattle show of a still earlier date at which a distant relation won a prize with a cow. If I felt a sentimental yearning to re-live the day on which I saw Shrewsbury and Gunn playing for Notts, and sought the match-card in the chaos of my papers, I should be more likely to fish out the programme of a temperance magic-lantern entertainment. And, even if I discovered the right paper, I doubt if I should feel as sentimental about it as I ought. I cannot easily sit by myself and feel sentimental over the programme of a vanished pleasure. I need company in order to become excited over old plays, old games, old election meetings. Let a man mention Ascot, and I can become as enthusiastic as he over the day on which Massine won the Gold Cup. Let him speak of George Thorne and Marie Studholme and Thomas E. Murray, and my heart will beat with his at the recollection of an age in which genius and beauty were regnant in the theatre. Great sermons in churches, great jokers in public-houses—these, too, will flood my memory with emotion if there

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is another to share it. Even at another man's recollection of a football match that I never saw I can feel a quickening of the pulse. But I do not think that the memories that excite us when we are conversing are the same as the memories that excite us when we are alone. When we are in company, we talk to excess of those pleasures of which there are programmes, but of our profoundest pleasures there are no programmes. One can have a programme of a concert, but not of a first meeting with a friend. There may be programmes of our amusements, but not of our ecstasies.

To say this may seem to be a disparagement of the arts, since a great deal of our pleasure in the arts is obtained at performances and exhibitions from which we carry away programmes and catalogues. But, even as regards the arts, it is probably true that ninety-nine hundredths of our pleasure goes no deeper than the fleeting pleasure of entertainment. There have been men who discovered in the music of Bach or in the painting of Titian a divine revelation, but they are in a minority. I doubt if the ordinary visitor to a picture-gallery brings away with him more of the divine flame than the lady brought from the last performance of *The Merry Widow*. Even if the painter is inspired, the spectator is not always inspired, and it takes two to give inspiration to a work of art. The majority of artists, however, whether painters or writers or

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musicians, have no more claim to be called inspired than ordinary men. They are performers, more or less skilful, and if they succeed in entertaining us, that is the most of which they are capable. Books have been written to read which (as men say) is a memorable experience ; but they could be fitted into a comparatively few shelves. The ordinary book is as far below the level of the great books as the ordinary after-dinner speech is below the level of the orations of Demosthenes. On the other hand, who that has the habit of reading does not recall hundreds of ordinary books in reading which he experienced excitement and delight ? Books which now seem tawdry to us once moved us to the marrow. Books which now seem shallow to us then stirred us to the depths. It is good to have experienced such pleasures, but when we look back on them it is not with a desire to re-live them, but as the indulgent seniors of our former selves. If we do occasionally wish to re-live them, it is only in order to re-live the illusions of youth.

Most of the reminiscent enthusiasm over the old music-halls and the old musical comedies is similarly an attempt to fly back on the wings of memory into the enchanted and prolific world of our youth. That black-faced coon with the droll patter and the skilful feet did not then seem such a giant to our fathers as he did to us ; and, if there were a comedian of equal talent performing to-day, we should wonder why our

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children hurried away early from the dinner-table to hear him. But for us he is part of our youth—an irradiated figure in the crowded garden of our memories. The first visit to *Tannhauser*—I have heard the opera belittled, but there was a time when it tore the soul out of the breast. And so with a thousand other things, some of them still masterpieces, some of them empty shows that have faded from everything but the memory of a generation now growing old. But even among the memories that give us pleasure we discriminate; we should feel appreciably poorer for the loss of the memory of having seen Irving in *The Bells*, but we know that if we had missed *The Gaiety Girl* there were a hundred substitutes 'just as good'. The one experience is worth looking back on because it was an experience of genius perfectly expressing itself; the other is worth looking back on only because we ourselves happened to experience it.

As we grow older, it seems to me, we lose our capacity for memorable experience in the world of the second- and third-rate to a greater degree than we lose it in the world of things rare and glorious. It may be that all that happens to us is that we mistake for the second- and third-rate much that is really rare and glorious, and that is seen to be such by a younger generation. But, if we leave the arts out of the question, and consider only people and places, we shall find

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that here our memories are still impressionable to enthusiasm. Our memories of early life may be more vivid, more tender, more crowded than our memories of last year. But fine people and fine places never cease to excite us and to become a part of our memories ; and, of all things worth remembering, these are surely the incomparable sources of delight. The last performance of *The Merry Widow*—yes, that, no doubt, is a wonderful experience to look back on, to re-live with the aid of a cherished programme. But I shall die in the knowledge that I missed it, and I shall not care.

XVIII. The Meaning ~ ~ ~

THOSE who defend bad grammar—and their numbers are increasing—sometimes do so on the ground that all is well if the speaker is intelligible. ‘That’s him,’ is undoubtedly as clear in its meaning as ‘That is he,’ and ‘The man whom he said was going to Edinburgh’ leaves no room for misunderstanding. Grammar that imposes rules with any other object than that of making the meaning clearer seems to the advocates of freedom as arbitrary as the Chinese etiquette of tea-drinking. They are equally impatient of the pedantic objections to the misuse of certain words such as ‘individual’ and ‘phenomenal’. They hold that, since no one could possibly misunderstand what is meant by ‘a seedy-looking individual’ or ‘a phenomenal success’, the dislike of such phrases is merely finicking, like the dislike of a black tie at a white-tie party. It is possible—indeed, certain—that a loose use of language, if persisted in, ultimately leads to woolliness and obscurity; but there are many barbarisms of speech which cause not a shadow of misunderstanding. If they are attacked, this is best done on the ground that the discipline of manners is as necessary in language as in life.

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This discipline is inevitably carried to extremes, but without it there can be no civilization.

It seems to me that the object of language is not only to make our meaning clear, but to make it clear in the fashion customary in civilized society. Convention in such matters is almost as important as meaning. If one were praising a new novel, for example, one could make one's enthusiasm as manifest in pidgin English as in the chastest prose, but praise in so unconventional a form would somehow be ineffective.

I recently found in an Anglo-Russian lesson-book interesting examples of the way in which meaning can be made clear in the oddest and most distorted kind of sentence. Here we are given good Russian sentences, with an English word-for-word translation between the lines, and on the whole the English translation is surprisingly easy to follow. Thus we have two proverbs translated: 'Not all gold what glitters,' 'Not spit in the well—may be of use some water to drink.' This may not be conventional English, but the meaning is as clear as the water in the well.

The most attractive feature of these lessons is an interlinear word-for-word translation of Tchekov's play, *The Three Sisters*; and here, too, we can follow the meaning with scarcely more difficulty than in the ordinary translations that have been published. There is,

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perhaps, even something added to the meaning, some acceptable element of strangeness, as a result of the general derangement of the language. Olga seems more Russian than ever when she indulges in recollections of Moscow in sentences like: 'Father received brigade and went out with us out of Moscow eleven years ago, and I distinctly recollect, in beginning of May there, at the season in Moscow already all in bloom, it is warm, all poured over with sun. Eleven years have passed, and I remember there all, as though we had left yesterday. My God! To-day in morning I woke up, saw mass of light, saw spring, and joy agitated itself in my soul, it wanted itself on to birthplace passionately.' That is surely prose charged with emotion, and what could be more stimulating to the imagination than Baron Tusenbach's description of Battery-Commander Vershinin to Irina? 'Interesting man?' asks Irina. 'Yes,' replies Tusenbach, 'nothing to oneself, only a wife, mother-in-law, and two girls. By that wifed in second time. He makes visits and everywhere tells that by him wife and two girls. And so here he will tell. Wife somewhat half-witted, with long girlish plaits, says only high-soaring things, philosophizes and often tempts herself on suicide, evidently in order to salt husband. I should long have left from such, but he suffers and only complains.' It must be admitted that, compared with Mrs.

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Garnett's translation, this version to some extent fails in lucidity. It is difficult, for example, to guess that to 'salt' a husband means to annoy him, or that 'nothing to oneself' means 'so-so'. But we are left in no doubt as to the general drift of Tusenbach's description, and the craziness seems still crazier because the English is as crazy as the battery-commander's second wife.

I am inclined to think, indeed, that we may for a long time have been following wrong principles in the translations of foreign masterpieces. English translators do their utmost to make the characters in foreign books talk good English, and as a result these characters lose a considerable amount of their highly desirable queerness. Here, for instance, are two translations of a passage in *The Three Sisters*, one in Mrs. Garnett's excellent English, the other in a word-for-word version. Mrs. Garnett makes Irina say :

' Oh dear ! to say nothing of human beings, it would be better to be an ox, better to be a humble horse and work, than a young woman who wakes at twelve o'clock, then has coffee in bed, then spends two hours in dressing. . . . Oh, how awful that is !

The word-for-word version of the same outburst runs :

' God mine, better to be an ox, better to be simple horse, only should work, than a young

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woman, who rises at twelve o'clock of day, afterwards drinks in bed coffee, afterwards two hours dresses. . . . Oh, how this is awful ! '

As regards clearness, there is nothing to choose between the two passages, but I think the Russianness of the young woman who breakfasts in bed after midday is expressed more emphatically in the word-for-word version.

Again, we are aware of a certain Englishness of tone when Mrs. Garnett translates :

VERSHININ : I knew your mother.

IRINA : Mother is buried in Moscow.

In the word-for-word version, on the other hand, we enjoy the full foreign flavour of the dialogue :

VERSHININ : I your little mother knew.

IRINA : Ma in Moscow buried.

What, again, could be more essentially exotic in flavour than the passage in which the three sisters, Masha, Olga, and Irina, discuss their brother Andrew, who is heard playing the violin :

MASHA : This is Andrew who plays, our brother.

IRINA : He by us a savant. Must be, will be, a professor.

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MASHA : According to wish of Pa.

OLGA : We to-day him teased. . . . He, it seems, in love a little.

IRINA : With one local young lady. To-day she will be by us, according to all probability.

MASHA : Ah, how she dresses ! Some strange, bright skirt and red blouse.

Superficial people have often laughed at the English of the phrase-books prepared for the use of travellers on the Continent. But may it not be that the genius of foreign languages is best captured in English such as no Englishman would dream of speaking ? After all, we read the Russians in order to get into recesses of the Russian mind, and, if they are anglicized too completely and too smoothly, they become little better than second-hand Englishmen. One might almost as well translate Synge, as translate a Russian, into Mayfair English. Hence, it seems to me, that producers of Tchekhov on the stage should in future ignore the good English translations of the plays and boldly make use of the word-for-word versions. Then, at last, the characteristic Russian despair would be given perfect expression in the English theatre, as when Andrew cries :

‘ Oh, where is it, whither went away my past, when I was young, joyful, clever, when I dreamt and thought refinedly ? I own ours

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exists already two hundred years, in it hundred thousand inhabitants, and not one who would not be resembling to others, not one savant, not one artist. Only they eat, drink, sleep, afterwards they die . . . are born of others and also eat, drink, sleep. Life theirs they diversify with brandy and with cards. And wives deceive husbands, and husbands tell lies, make appearance, that nothing not see, nothing not hear. Vulgar influence oppresses children, and they become such pitiful ones as their parents.'

Does not the very helplessness of the English emphasize and make clear the helplessness of the Russian? Critics have complained of the unsatisfactoriness of many of the attempts to act Tchekov's plays in England. Let Sir Nigel Playfair produce *The Three Sisters* in real Russo-English and we shall see the opening of a new era in the translation of foreign works of genius. For even the stage-directions lose something in the course of their transmission into orthodox English. How tame seems Mrs. Garnett's 'In the house the "Maiden's Prayer" is played on the piano,' in comparison with the Russo-English version, 'In house they play on grand piano "Prayer of a Virgin" '!

Possibly, then, all the friends of bad English—of bad grammar, split infinitives, clichés, and words used in their wrong meanings—are right. A house-agent's prose is at least as intelligible

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as Tchegov translated word-for-word. 'As soon as poss.' is as clear to the meanest understanding as 'in vain, Feodor Ilyitch, you moustache to yourself shaved off.' That is, perhaps, how everybody will talk in the world-language of the future. The floodgates have been opened by the anti-grammarians, and they will then have their reward.

XIX. The Clergyman With The Umbrella ~ ~ ~ ~

THE front page of *The Times* contained a pretty apology the other day :

THE CLERGYMAN whose umbrella came in contact with the eye of a lady hurrying to catch a bus, outside St. Paul's, yesterday, wishes to EXPRESS his great REGRET and distress. He would be much relieved to know that there was no serious injury.—Write Box K. 1858, *The Times*, E.C.4.

It is charming, in a world in which the manners of the road have so conspicuously degenerated, to find an instance of conscience so scrupulous over a minor accident with an umbrella. Only a pedestrian, I fancy, could be capable of courtesy on this level. Possibly, only a clergyman. By a pedestrian I mean, of course, a person who, not owning a vehicle himself, habitually fights his way to a seat on a hired vehicle. Until a comparatively few years ago the majority of townspeople were in this sense pedestrians. That is, they walked or ran as far as the nearest bus-stop, and then, if necessary, engaged in a rough-and-tumble in order to make sure of getting a place. Unlike the

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motorist of to-day, they were permitted to use their shoulders, elbows, and even umbrellas, as a means of cutting in past a weaker brother or sister. There was no rule of the road, and it was permissible to pass the person in front either on the right side or on the left, and, if there was a collision, no exchange of names and addresses was necessary. There were, it must be admitted, even in the great days of pedestrianism, persons who shrank from taking part in these scrambles at stopping-places, but, after a brief experience, they found that they were always left behind, and that, as a result of constantly giving way to others, they occasioned distress at home by arriving late for meals. Hence, in time, they too learnt to shove and push and struggle, and the bus-tops became the rivals of the playing-fields of Eton in hardening the manhood of the race.

It seems incredible to us to-day, but in those days the manners of pedestrians on buses were the target of a great amount of angry criticism. The pedestrian to-day is seldom criticized except for walking across the street to the danger of a motorist. At that time, however, he was commonly denounced as a boor, a kind of Juggernaut who endangered the lives of women and children, an elephant who trod on the corns of the innocent as he made his way to a seat, a monster who would sit down on you as the bus lurched and who would

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remain sitting on you unless you had the vigour to unseat him. Letters of complaint poured into the newspapers. Elderly men recalled the old days of chivalry, when every man was a gentleman, and when the notion of a man wrestling with a tired girl for the last seat on a bus was inconceivable. Tramway companies devised a hortatory notice : ' The lifeboat rule is, women and children first.' It was all in vain, however. The pedestrian was a charming person so long as he had everything his own way. Let him be faced with competition, however, and he became a wild beast.

That, it is to be feared, is the common history of politeness. Politeness is general so long as it is easy, or when it is compulsory. In an overcrowded world it ceases to be easy, and, if it is to survive, it has to be made compulsory. Hence the introduction of the queue system at the doors of theatres and at the booking-offices of railway stations. If there are only three people waiting to get into the pit of a theatre they will be models of courtesy. If two of them are men and one of them a pretty girl, the two men will give way to the pretty girl and insist on her taking the first place at the ticket-office. What chivalry, reminiscent of Bayard, Sir Philip Sidney, and Dr. Johnson ! Let there be three thousand people waiting, however, and only three hundred seats available, and what a transformation is there ! In the absence of queues the

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rule now is, first come first served. There is no quarter either for beauty or for sex. The man with a pair of strong shoulders sees himself in the midst of a crowd of opponents, and becomes as merciless as a forward in a maul as he battles towards the ticket-office. Even if he is naturally courteous, he cannot help himself. If he attempts to give way, he discovers that those he has made way for are not the fragile and the helpless, but a tide of Battling Sikis. Were it not for the queue system, it is probable that in these congested days no one but a trained athlete would ever be able to get into the pit or gallery to see a popular play. The queue may be a poor substitute for chivalry, but, where it exists, it at least enables life to run as smoothly as the older chivalry did.

And, even since the introduction of the queue, we often see a pedestrian trying to take an unfair advantage of his neighbours, if there is no policeman keeping order. There is, as a rule, some one present who will protest loudly if a late-comer in a railway station does not take up a position at the end of the queue but attempts to insinuate himself improperly into a place near the ticket-office. But it is not every one who cares to make a scene in public in the interests of justice or even in self-interest, and an unscrupulous late-comer often enough has his way.

I do not wish to frame a general indictment

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of pedestrians. They are, I am sure, very like other people, but undoubtedly they were great shovers and pushers till they were stopped. The real explanation of their behaviour is, I fancy, that they lost their heads in an emergency. If they could not get where they wanted immediately, they began to be afraid they would never get there, and they would do in a frenzy things they would never have done in cold blood. I sometimes wonder what would happen if there were no officials present to regulate the exit of the passengers from a Channel steamer. For some reason or other, when a boat arrives at the quay, nine out of ten people believe that, if they do not get off the boat quickly, they will not be in time to catch their train. If they dared, the people behind would use their bags as weapons of offence to crash their way through the people in front in order to be first at the Customs. The bottom-gear movement towards the gangway fills them with an extraordinary impatience, and they resume their normal humanity only when with a last desperate effort they have managed to swing themselves and their baggage between the rails of the gangway.

It is not that every pedestrian loses his self-control when in a crowd. It is, I believe, only the exceptional pedestrian who does so. But the exceptions are numerous enough to convince the others that, if the ordinarily polite give

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way, the impolite will be left in possession of the field. In the great days of pedestrianism, the situation became acuter when the pedestrian was accompanied by a woman. If he and she found themselves in the midst of a mob of all ages and sexes scrambling to get on to a bus, for example, and if at length his companion had got safely on to the bus, was it more courteous to follow her or to make way for the woman and child who were immediately behind him? If he made way for the woman and child, an agile fat man with an umbrella would probably dive into the opening, and the polite man in the end would be left standing on the pavement, with the result that the woman whom he had deserted would have to stop the bus a hundred yards farther on and get off because she had come out without any money. Whatever he did, the male pedestrian was bound to be unchivalrous to somebody, and in the end he, too, as a rule, tempered his politeness with a moderate amount of pushing and shoving.

It is sometimes urged that, with the coming of the equality of the sexes, all such problems have vanished for ever, and that pedestrians of both sexes may henceforth push and shove on equal terms. I detest this view of life which makes a man's conduct to a woman depend on her possession of a vote. We men in the old days did not take our hats off to women out of a feeling of compassion for

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fellow-creatures who had no votes: we took them off because it was the tradition to do so. It was the result of centuries of idealism, and, as it cost us no trouble, we carried on the tradition. It is the same with all the other minor instances of chivalry—opening doors, giving up seats, and so forth. All these things may be of very little use to women, but they are of very great use to men in teaching them not to be pushing and shoving pedestrians, and so long as they cost us no trouble, we shall continue to do them. They are one of our links with civilization, raising us above the boor. That is why I strongly approve of the clergyman's advertisement in *The Times*. 'The clergyman whose umbrella came in contact with the eye of a lady hurrying to catch a bus'—there is the smack of old-world courtesy in the very phrasing. 'Came in contact'. It could not have been put more delicately. It suggests at once that no one was at fault, that the clergyman was at least not guilty of deliberate battery, and that, if the lady was in any way to blame for the accident, it was none the less distressing to the clergyman. All his concern was for her. Was she hurt? Was the eye intact? Poor wounded eye—had it been a man's eye, would the clergyman have given it a thought? I doubt it. The difference between injuring a man's eye and injuring a woman's eye with an umbrella is as enormous

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as it is inexplicable ; and it will always be so while chivalry lasts. How long it will last, now that pedestrians are taking to motoring, I do not know. One clergyman does not make an age of chivalry. But does he not point the way back with his old-world ferrule ? The lady's eye may not have been injured in vain.

XX. Without A Smile ♪ ♪ ♪

THE Georgians are accustomed to regard the Victorians as a grave race, stiff with conventionalism and censorious of enjoyment. This is an illusion of a kind to which the next generation but one has always been susceptible. The truth about the Victorian age is, of course, that instead of being more solemn than the ages that have succeeded it, it was much too hilarious to please the taste of a critical Georgian generation. It was an age that laughed at puns, that roared at 'laughing songs' in the music-halls, that entered heartily into the spirit of bun-eating competitions. Its very drawing-room jokes were of a simple-souled hilarity almost inconceivable to a generation that has fallen under the shadow of Freud.

I came lately on a little book, *Fun and Flirtation, Forfeits*, which contains the rules for a number of games suitable for playing at a mid-Victorian party. Few of the games survive to-day, a sad proof of the decline of risibility. Possibly, in some remote cathedral city the unspoiled young are still playing the delicious game called 'The Canaries', but I confess I had never heard of it till I read the description of it in *Fun and Flirtation*. It is played by

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one lady and one gentleman, sitting in the middle of the room and addressing each other thus in the manner of canaries :

GENTLEMAN : Sweet.

LADY : Sweet (*echo*).

GENTLEMAN : Sweet, sweet.

LADY : Sweet, sweet (*echo*).

GENTLEMAN : Sweet, sweet, pretty sweet.

LADY : Sweet, sweet, pretty sweet (*echo*).

(Neither must smile.)

The lady and gentleman might not be permitted to smile, but be sure the onlookers did. And what scenes of mirth must have taken place while the game called 'Poor Puss' was in progress—a game in which 'all the ladies and one gentleman' were the players, and in which 'the gentleman goes round and says to each lady, "Puss, Puss", to which she must gravely answers, "Me-ew! Me-ew!"' the first to smile paying a forfeit. A more elaborate variation of 'Poor Puss' is described under the name of 'Miss Ann and Jane Smith's Tabby Cats', which required the participation of two gentlemen and all the ladies. 'The ladies all remain in their places, and two gentlemen in shawls and bonnets or caps go round, one with a saucer of milk, the other with a tea-spoon with which he gives a sip of milk to each, saying, "Take that, pretty puss!" to which, after

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taking it, "Puss" must gravely answer, "Me-ew" giggling all the more helplessly no doubt, because she is forbidden to giggle. And yet the Victorians are commonly portrayed for us as a population of statues fitted only for exhibition in a cemetery. But have we such fun nowadays? Would our eyes brighten at the spectacle of that good game 'Magic Music', in which four gentlemen, forbidden to smile, 'must be seated in a row, and, throwing themselves back in their chairs, must all snore in different keys, the "Dead March in Saul" being played over three times as an accompaniment'? The young, I fear, have become aged since America discovered Europe and introduced a new rhythm of pleasure.

It has always been a favourite amusement with children to attempt to preserve their gravity while other people try to make them laugh, and most of these games are of this kind. It is the loss of gravity that is the supreme and penalty-bringing joke, and again and again the rules of the game include the phrase 'without smiling'. In a thousand years, when the world had become civilized, this may be regarded as convincing evidence of the agelastic grimness of the Victorians, and post-psychanalysts will probably be expatiating on the dark minds of parents who could forbid their children to laugh even during so harmless a nonsense-game as 'Botanical Questions'—a

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game in which a gentleman goes to each of the ladies in turn and says to her :

How many pretty noses goes
To make a bunch of roses ?

to which the lady must answer :

I supposes two noses
Make a bunch of roses.

‘ No laughing, or begin again ’ runs the harsh instruction.

Possibly, Victorian parents saw in those games a valuable means of educating their children in self-control. Possibly, they did not. Yet what a race of Roman matrons must have grown up if mid-Victorian girls could have played without smiling a game so conducive to mirth as ‘ Misapplied Talent ! ’ In this game :

The ladies all rise and stand behind their chairs ; the gentleman coming up to each chair compliments it on its wood, covering, shape, and antiquity, finishing by a profound bow, and placing his lips on the top of it. The lady it belongs to must say, without even smiling, ‘ Valuable talents greatly misapplied.’

Faintly indecorous, you may think, for the subjects of Queen Victoria. But you have only to read the account of the game called ‘ The

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United Circle', in order to realize that the author of *Fun and Flirtation, Forfeits*, would not for an instant have tolerated anything that might involve indecorum. Here 'one Lady begins the Game':

A lady is to stand in the middle of the room, and wish aloud for one of the gentlemen or ladies present to join her there. When the person called has obeyed the summons, he or she is in like manner to wish for some one else, each person wished for taking the hand of the last speaker. This wishing for a companion is continued till a circle is formed, by the last player giving his or her hand, both to the person who summoned him, and to the lady who began the game. The lady who commences then kisses her right-hand neighbour, i.e., the friend she chose herself, and the kiss is to be passed round the circle. As the ladies generally wish for each other, it will be found that no indecorum and a great deal of fun may be found in the game.

After that, who can deny that innocent enjoyment is the prevailing note of these games? What could be more Eden-like than 'The Musical Duck', in which a gentleman 'chooses any lady who can sing, and she is to sing, to any air she pleases, the words "Quack! quack!" using no other words and singing the air correctly'? What could be more reminiscent of the Golden Age than 'Great People', in which

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a lady and gentleman stand facing each other,
the lady saying :

‘ I am pretty Princess Pep-pew-pew-pop-woski,
And am extremely nervous,’

the gentleman replying :

‘ I am gallant Marshal Mimi-mew-mew-koski,
And greatly at your service.’

while they ‘ bow and curtsy profoundly to each other, with solemn gravity ’ ? Nor even in ‘ Welsh Courtship ’, played by one lady and one gentleman, is there anything to bring the blush to the cheek of innocence :

GENTLEMAN : Miss Wynn, I’m dying !

LADY : Mr. Davies, I’m sighing !

GENTLEMAN : Would Miss Wynn
Accept my fin.

LADY : No, Mr. Davies ;
I don’t want a *rara avis*.

An aesthete might frown on pastimes so unintellectual, but the moralist can scarcely quarrel with them. And the forfeits themselves are all within the bound of the strictest propriety, as may be gathered from the list suggested :

1. The lady is to go to three gentlemen and ask each a favour—(i.e., the favours may be as absurd as she pleases. She may ask for a song, or for him to imitate a teapot, crow, bark, etc.).

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2. To curtsy to each of the gentlemen without smiling—(i.e., the gentleman must try to say or do something to make the task difficult).

3. To remain perfectly silent for five minutes, while the other players question, tease, or coax her to speak.

Nothing surely could be more suggestive of a serene and placid, and, at the same time, easily-amused world than this record of vanished games, written with such a sense of respectable delight. Now that the reaction towards Victorianism has begun, we may yet see a revival of some of them, organized in the parks by Mr. Lansbury. It is not long, indeed, since I saw in a newspaper a description of a still-existing game, which seemed to me almost worthy of a place in *Fun and Flirtation* for its mirthful possibilities. It was called 'Prison Diet', and the description of it ran: 'An amusing forfeit is to place the victim, blindfolded, in the middle of the room, to be fed with spoonfuls of water by all the players in turn until he guesses who is feeding him.' What fun! It is not a game that I should care to play myself, but I welcome even the faintest symptom of the return of the boisterous sanity of the Victorians. While 'Prison Diet' is played, the last spark of Victorianism cannot be said to be extinguished beyond hope of revival.

XXI. The Sanity of Women ♪ ♪

‘**F**ORTUNATELY both for themselves and for others, women are still sane’ is the reassuring statement of a brilliant feminist. The lengthening of skirts has apparently raised doubts of this in the mind of an anti-feminist critic, and it is well that so authoritative a certificate has been issued. It is true that ‘sane’ is a word of vague import. It may mean anything from ‘not quite mad’ to ‘wise as a philosopher’. In the former sense the majority of the human race have nearly always been sane; in the latter sense there has never been a majority, male or female—scarcely even a considerable minority—of sane persons on the surface of the globe. Consequently, it must be assumed that the writer used the word in the more diluted sense. Even so, her message is in these days encouraging.

Unfortunately, certificates of the sanity of one’s sex or group or country are not always accepted outside the circle which is certified sane by one of its own members. I, for instance, am an old-fashioned man who regards as sane that vast majority of my sex who go about their business clad as to the legs in tubular trousers and wearing collars fastened round their necks

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with studs. It would be impossible to persuade a man belonging to the dress-reform group of this, however. The dress reformer goes about in flimsy shorts, permeable by the rays of the sun, and wears his shirt open at the neck. 'You are all insane,' he tells the rest of us, while we for our part should feel that we were behaving like lunatics if we appeared in public in his garments. I myself would as soon walk along the Strand with a Boy Scout's pole. It is not that we are so much in love with long trousers and studded collars that we should have hankered after them if we had been born in Caesar's Rome. In Rome we should have done what the Romans did. We should have worn the toga and looked on it as the sanest garment yet invented by man. The definition of a sane garment—for men, if not for women—is a garment that is neither odd nor conspicuous. The cloak of invisibility is, I fancy, the masculine dream. To be uncomfortably conspicuous seems worse than to be uncomfortably clothed, though, as for discomfort, there is a great deal of nonsense talked about the discomfort of men's clothes. The men who complain about the discomfort of men's clothes are men who have nothing to complain about.

The sane rule in the minor matters of life, such as clothes and food, is to follow the stream and to do as everybody else does. In regard to food, no doubt, a moral question may arise,

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and a man's conscience may compel him to be a vegetarian. I have myself a facing-both-ways conscience on this point, and, if every one else were a vegetarian, I could cheerfully decline into a vegetarian too. But, apart from conscience and from reasons of health, there is little to be said for eccentricity at the table. It is best to eat like an Englishman in England, like a Frenchman in France, and like an Italian in Italy. The table should be a scene, not of grim propose, but of relaxation.

Clothes, on the other hand, are a much less important matter than food. Here there is no question of conscience, except for those who object to wearing any substance taken from the body of a dead animal. Even the question of health comes in only in a minor degree. Occasionally some practice, such as tight-lacing, which may have disastrous effects on the health of women, becomes fashionable. But there have been few fashions under the reign of which an ordinary human being could not live healthily. If men are healthier to-day than they were in the eighteenth century it is not because they dress more healthily, but because they eat and drink more healthily and because they take more frequent baths. The improvement in women's health is due to comparable reasons. They live more in the open air and, while doing so, will be healthy whether they wear short skirts or long.

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It may be thought that to argue in favour of following the stream in unimportant matters is to argue in favour of a mechanical view of society. Many modern people conjure up an alarming picture of universal standardization leading to an era in which human beings, alike in their customs and opinions, will be as indistinguishable from each other as pins in a row. It is a picture, it seems to me, which is purely fanciful. The chief danger of the modern world is probably not too much standardization but too much freakish individuality. In the past, the Church, the State, and conventions of conduct and opinion, imposed some kind of standard on men and women. Life was at once standardized and individual ; but it was lived largely in obedience to an accepted pattern. To-day the pattern is no longer accepted to the same degree, and the result is that there were never so many extraordinary people on the face of the earth as there are at present. One has only to think of one's friends in order to realize how little the modern human being behaves like the product of a machine. The people whom we do not know commonly seem as like one another as peas in a pod, just as those who have never been to Oxford imagine that Oxford undergraduates all resemble each other in speech, character, and manners. But, if we apply the test to any group of people whom we know, we shall see good reasons for believing

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that the world is still full of individuals of as clearly-marked character as Silas Wegg and Mr. Pickwick and Harold Skimpole. Dickens is the only novelist who ever understood the universal eccentricity of human beings. Yet the bee in the bonnet hums at least as loudly in our day as in his. It has invaded literature itself with its music.

Hence, I do not think that we need be greatly disturbed by some trivial change in the fashion of dress and by the universal servility with which women hasten to follow it. Even if all the women in England wore the same uniform, they would still remain as various as the characters of a Dickens novel—oddities all, even as men are. One of the great difficulties of civilization has been to keep the oddity of the individual in check, and, if human beings have become the slaves of fashion, this is for the most part because civilized society insists upon their looking less odd than they really are. If the ordinary human being were examined as to his or her reasons for dressing according to the conventions of the day, he or she, if honest, would answer: 'I dare not look odd.' It is not that oddity is a bad thing in itself—it is, in moderation, highly desirable—but there must be temperance even in oddity, and so, as far as possible, we banish eccentricity from our conduct in the things that do not matter.

To preserve a balance between oddity and

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convention—that is the true sanity for men, for women, and for children. It was sane for women to wear short skirts yesterday; it is sane for them to wear long skirts to-day. In matters in which no question of right or wrong is involved, whatever is right. Women will still be sanely dressed so long as they all agree to wear more or less the same sort of clothes, and men will still be sanely dressed so long as they are not ahead of their age in their costumes. It is possible, of course, that the dress reformer of to-day will be the sane man of a hundred years hence, but, while admiring his foresight, most of us would rather be sane to-day.

It was not, however, because of women's conventionalism in dress that the feminist I have quoted pronounced them sane. She pronounced them sane, indeed, in spite of their conventionalism in dress—generally sane in body, mind, and soul. That opens up an enormous field of debate. *Are women sane?* *Are men sane?* In the watered-down sense of the word, perhaps yes. But really sane? No, not within a thousand miles of it.

XXII. The Bath ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

IT is reported in a Polish newspaper that a Bill is being drafted which will compel every citizen of the country to take a bath at least once a month. A bathroom in the house will be accepted as evidence that the residents make reasonable use of it ; but those who have no bathroom must carry bath-cards, to be stamped monthly by an official as proof that a bath has been taken. Children under ten and men and women over seventy, it is said, are to be excused.

That announcement will, I have no doubt, seem funny to nearly everybody who takes a bath daily. No sooner does a group of human beings acquire the habit of bathing than it begins to find the natural hydrophobic man extraordinarily comic. A dramatist has only to bring on to the stage a poor man or a tramp who displays consternation at the prospect of being given a bath to make the occupants of the stalls rock with laughter. Mr. O'Casey produced one of his most amusing effects in *The Silver Tassie* by showing us a patient in a hospital making desperate attempts to avoid the bath that was coming to him. It was in much the same spirit that a *Punch* artist drew

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a sketch of a *nouveau riche* taking a guest into the magnificent bathroom in his newly acquired mansion, and remarking naively : ‘ Makes a man quite look forward to Saturday night, don’t it ? ’ For in England even to leave an interval of a week between baths is funny. Possibly the people who take two baths a day regard as funny the people who take only one. There is no end to the fun to be got out of life when the prosperous classes take to soap and water.

The daily bath, I am sure, is an excellent habit, but it is not so excellent that it gives us the right to indulge in these airs of derisive superiority. I feel that the man who has a chance of bathing every day and does not do so is morally a slacker ; but, on the other hand, I have never noticed that the man who takes his morning bath as regularly as his breakfast is conspicuously a better citizen than the mass of his fellows. Some of the men I have known who were nearest the criminal type were among the cleanest, the most scrupulously shaved, the most neatly dressed. Is it not a fact that hotel-keepers are constantly taken in by dapper and soap-scented gentlemen who write cheques with no money in the bank to meet them. It would be useless for a stranger with unwashed face and hands, a dirty collar, and two days’ growth of beard to attempt to persuade a hotel-manager to cash a cheque for him.

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Cleanliness, even when farthest removed from godliness, inspires confidence, and a daily bath is almost essential if you wish to cheat your fellowmen. Dirt may be all very well for a beggar of sixpences, but larger sums can be extracted only by men with shining and well-soaped faces. Cleanliness is an aid to plausibility. It gives the rogue confidence in himself and it gives other people confidence in him. This is not to say that those of us who are addicted to regular bathing are doing something of which we ought to be ashamed. The morning bath does not mark us as scoundrels any more than it marks us as honest men. There were saints in the Middle Ages who believed that to enter a bath was to pay undue attention to the body and to encourage vanity ; but we can escape even the charge of vanity by taking our baths warm. As regards the cold-bath fanatic, however, I suspect that the saints were right. The man who plunges daily into cold water all the year round is obviously in a dangerous spiritual as well as physical state. As for the physical dangers of the all-the-year-round cold bath, it stands to reason that to fly in the face of nature in thus fashion must ultimately wreck all but the strongest constitutions. One might as well attempt to become hardy by pouring kettles of boiling water over oneself as to accomplish the same end by freezing. And the spiritual danger of the cold bath is as real

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and graver. It makes men boastful. It persuades them that by immersing themselves in cold tap-water they are by some magical process acquiring strong and noble characters. I should not quarrel with any one who introduced a series of cold baths into a course of exercises in moral training: the holy men of India set their disciples more unpleasant ordeals than that. But I hold that as soon as a man has proved his resoluteness by taking a cold bath every day for a year, he should pass on to more difficult and less suicidal tasks. To go on dipping into cold water long after one has proved that one has the courage to do so is like remaining in the same class year after year and learning the same lessons over and over again. The cold bath is morally and spiritually good only while it remains hateful. As soon as it becomes as easy as the multiplication table it is time to advance into more abstruse studies in the heroic.

The cold-bather, unhappily, cannot be persuaded of this. What began as an act of heroism has become a vice—a vice that he cannot give up. He wallows in his tap-water, and sings songs of triumph as he flings it about him. He becomes as vain as Alan Breck, and as he goes off to his day's work, wears an air of disgusting cheerfulness. He looks down on his acquaintances who have turned on the hot tap—even if it was only enough to take the

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chill off the water—as weaklings. He is a man intoxicated. If you told him that, in spite of his buoyant appearance, you already saw in him the seeds of moral and physical decline, he would laugh at you. You might as well try to argue with a lunatic. All the experience of mankind is against him, but to a man in the grip of the passion for cold water the experience of mankind counts for nothing.

Whether it is natural to take a bath, or even to wash in any circumstances, is another question. I do not know whether any of those libertarians who are nowadays experimenting in letting children do what they please have tried the experiment of leaving it to their children to wash or not to wash as they feel inclined.

It would be interesting to know, for instance, whether a child of four would infallibly go to the bathroom every morning if neither parent nor nurse were there to compel him. It is clear that children will voluntarily bathe in rivers, ponds, and the sea: to bathe in such circumstances is a pleasure, like climbing trees or riding a horse. But the object of such bathing is not cleanliness. Even the child who has had a bath at home is eager to plunge into the waves of the seashore. Have the more utilitarian ablutions under the dullness of a roof the same natural attractions for the young? Will the hands of the unconstrained child be

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clean as often as the hands of the child who lives in obedience to a nagging nurse ? I doubt it. There used to be—there may still be—a soap advertisement which represented a small reluctant boy being washed by an elderly woman. It was clear that he resented her attentions bitterly, and that to him being washed seemed a form of torture. Advocates of liberty may reply that this is exactly what washing was in the age of Victoria, but that, if the female bullies of that time had left the boy alone, he would have come in time to take a pride in having a clean neck and fingers that were never inky. They may be right, but I should like to see the matter put to the proof. My own suspicion is that very few children would wash as often as they ought to wash but for the tyranny of their elders.

Even if washing is unnatural, however, that is no argument against it. It is unnatural, not in the sense in which taking a cold bath in winter is unnatural, but only in the sense in which reading and writing are unnatural. Washing and bathing in warm water are developments of a natural love of orderliness, just as reading and writing are developments of a natural love of communication. They are the acquired characteristics of man as a social being. They make him less unpleasant to live with, and society does well to take all possible steps to compel him to conform to the accepted

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standards in such matters. Enemies of standardization may cry out with apprehension at the prospect of a world in which all the inhabitants have been standardized by soap and water, and may plead for a richer civilization to which powerful individuals with unwashed faces will bring variety. And, no doubt, even under the strictest rule, there will always be powerful individuals with unwashed faces who will refuse to become slaves of the machine. But it seems to me that an individuality that would wilt at the touch of soap and water can scarcely be an individuality worth preserving. I am not sure, however, that if the rumour of its intentions is true, the Polish Home Office is going about the business of encouraging cleanliness in the most tactful fashion. During the first ten years of my life in London I lived in houses in which there was no bathroom, and I should have felt resentful if I had been compelled to carry a bath-ticket and have it stamped once a month at a public bath-house. Few people realize how many houses there still are in London in which, for want of a bathroom, such of the inhabitants as care for bathing have to content themselves with tin tubs and such incommodious makeshifts. And even these are not always to be had without difficulty, either in town or in country. I have known a landlady in Surrey, indeed, who grudged her lodgers their daily baths because it gave her

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the trouble of carrying the water upstairs. 'You'll wash yourselves away,' was her bitter cry one day as she lugged the fifth can of water upstairs for the fifth bath of the morning. It was the last protest of the natural woman overborne by the advancing tide of civilization. I respect her as I do the Last of the Mohicans. But you cannot put back the hands of the clock or turn off the tap in the bathroom. Powerful individuals will protest, but there is a flood pouring from the tap under which all but the very supermen of uncleanness will ultimately be submerged.

XXIII. In Defence of Silly People >

MR. H. G. WELLS, in the course of a recent exposition of his creed, reiterates his faith in 'the master being, Man', and in the necessity of devoting whatever gifts we possess to his good. He makes it clear, however, that by Man he does not mean men, or, at least, the men of our own time—the Toms, Dicks, and Harrys who at present populate the earth from China to Peru. 'I do not believe,' he declares, 'in the surrender of one jot or tittle of one's intelligence and will to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or to the will of the majority, or any such nonsense; I am not that sort of democrat. The world and its future is not for feeble folk any more than it is for selfish folk. It is not for the multitude, but for the best. The best of to-day will be the commonplace of to-morrow.' And he goes on to say: 'If I am something of a social leveller, it is not because I want to give silly people a good time, but because I want to make opportunity universal and not leave out one single being who is worth while.'

There is much in this that is reasonable enough. Every one who has given five minutes' thought to the subject, will agree, for example,

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that the will of the majority has in itself no more claim on our respect than the will of the minority. That 'the will of the majority must prevail' is a useful working formula in politics, and it is a formula which enables sharply-divided societies to live in a state of civil peace instead of wasting their energies in civil war. Hence the formula is a good one, even if the will of the majority is sometimes bad. At the same time, the will of the majority, if it became a will to tyrannize over the minority, would produce as odious a tyranny as any other dictatorship. If the majority in a Protestant country decided to suppress the Catholic religion, no democrat would regard such a decision as really democratic; and, if a working-class majority resolved that the professional classes must live on inferior food and send their children to inferior schools, it would win little respect from subsequent ages. One has merely to consider a few hypothetical cases of this kind in order to realize that the will of the majority is tolerable only so long as the majority remembers that it has duties and that the minority has rights. The voice of the people is so far from being the voice of God that at a crisis in history it could think of nothing better to call for than the release of Barabbas. Yet, somehow, the formula that commends it works—in the countries that are fit to work it.

When, however, Mr. Wells comes to the happiness of the majority, and its importance,

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he is on more disputable ground. If one had supreme power, it is difficult to think of anything better at which one could aim than the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Some of the Golden Ages of the past are ages which abounded in great poets, painters, sculptors, and orators, but others are ages in which human beings as a whole seem to have been happier, or at least less miserable, than in common times. The medievalist idealizes a Merrie England in which, rightly or wrongly, he believes cheerfulness was more universal than it is in our industrial towns to-day. Wordsworth hailed the French Revolution with rapture because he believed that it was a prelude to 'joy in widest commonalty spread'. Those who praise Free Trade praise it not least because by its coming thousands of 'feeble folk' and 'silly people' were made more comfortable and were spared the miseries of semi-starvation. A statesman who, during a food shortage, told his fellow-countrymen that he had no time to attend to the wants of silly people because he was devoting all his talents to the good of the master being, Man, would go down to history as a monster.

To compare Mr. Wells's position with that of such a statesman would clearly be a travesty. But I am not sure that Mr. Wells's position can be defended with much better reasons. There is nothing more dangerous in politics than to

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pay too much attention to an imaginary master being, Man, at the expense of silly people who are actually alive. It is possible to look after the interests of the silly people and at the same time to work for the good of a wiser posterity, and obviously all wise statesmanship must do both. But the ordinary statesman would work for the good of posterity even if he thought that it would consist of men and women no better than ourselves. Where Mr. Wells differs from most statesmen is that he appears to be more enthusiastic about posterity than about his contemporaries, because he believes that posterity will be a greater and nobler race of men and women. Everybody hopes that it will be, but it is a thing that we cannot take for granted. The world has made progress in many respects since the Flood, and even since the days of the Greeks; but we cannot say for certain that the proportion of silly people has become noticeably smaller. I have seen it stated that the human brain to-day is not demonstrably superior to the brain of men whom we look back on as savages. I cannot help believing, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that the collective intelligence of the human race has improved, but I am also prepared to believe that the ordinary brain in the Athens of Pericles was at least equal to the ordinary brain in London in the twentieth century. If this is so, it seems possible that the

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master being, Man, may be a mere figure of speech to which it would be ridiculous to sacrifice ordinary men and women with their comparatively moderate desires.

Mr. Wells, of course, makes a distinction between giving silly people a good time and giving everybody an 'opportunity'. But what does giving everybody an opportunity mean except giving the majority an opportunity to have a good time? Some will take advantage of the opportunity to become learned in the arts and sciences, but even most of these will devote a great part of their energies to having a good time or to giving their families a good time—to living in more comfortable houses, eating better food, wearing better clothes, and all kinds of material comforts and pleasures. Silliness is as prevalent in the world of art and science as anywhere else. It is not cured by the reading of poetry. It does not vanish when one is an expert in higher mathematics. Mr. Wells would probably agree that many philosophers and statesmen are silly. If this is so, how can we demand miraculous intelligence in ordinary human beings—even in the human beings of to-morrow? Education has done much for men and women, but how far can it be said to have eradicated what Mr. Wells would regard as silliness? Some of the most highly educated men and women in the world talk and behave as sillily as agricultural labourers.

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For this reason I hold that the social reformer and idealist will have to come to terms with the silly people, and that he ought to make it one of his chief objects to see that they have a reasonably good time. He cannot be equally sure of benefiting them in any other way. It is better that a poor man should be a philosopher than that he should have a chicken in his pot, but one can be more certain of doing him good by giving him a chicken in his pot than by punishing him for his indifference to philosophy. A good time no doubt, is something more than a sufficiency of food, clothes, and shelter ; but there is much to be said even for a good time that implies a little luxury. Naturally, one would not like to see everybody, whether silly or wise, having too much of a good time. But that is only because too much of a good time ceases to be a good time. And, apart from this, one likes to see other people living intelligently and with something more serious to think about than eating and drinking and gala nights in the Riviera hotels. The State can do much towards giving men and women an opportunity to enjoy wider interests than these ; but, before everything else, it seems to me, it must put good food, clothes, and shelter—in other words, the first ingredients of a good time.

The truth is, if a social levelling resulted only in everybody's having a good time, that alone would be an abundant justification for it.

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The religious teachers and philosophers would come afterwards and point out that in order to go on having a good time it was necessary to think about other things than having a good time. But the statesman would have done good work, as the doctor has done good work when he has cured a disease, or the lifeboatman when he has rescued a shipwrecked crew. The doctor does not hesitate to save the life of a patient till he has been assured that his patient is a being who is 'worth while' and not a silly person. The lifeboatmen do not abandon a sinking passenger-ship on the ground that the passengers are mainly silly people who would merely go and have a good time if they were rescued. It does not matter twopence whether people are silly or not. We are all silly by some standard, but, whether we are silly or wise, we prefer being alive to being dead ; we prefer being well-fed to starving ; we hate being cold or wet or unable to afford a holiday, and we hate these things for our families as well as for ourselves. Even if we are saints or philosophers, these are still among our profoundest miseries ; and we prefer a civilization that would release us from them even to a civilization that would concentrate on producing 'the best' men and women. Besides, who knows who are 'the best' ? Is it certain that the matter will have been decided even after another million years ? My own impression is that, unless a

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miracle happens, the world will, for as long as we can foresee, be populated by a multitude largely consisting of silly people. I confess I prefer these silly people to the master being, Man, whom I have never met. I hope that they will have a better and better time as time goes on, and, if the master being, Man, ever appears among them, I am sure that he will see to it that they have.

XXIV. Community This, That, and the Other ~ ~ ~

WHEN I read that community singing was about to be organized at the English seaside resorts, I felt none of the enthusiasm that the newspaper organizing it seemed to expect from its readers. I am a man who can read even of the delights of community walking without any longing to participate in them. When I pass a riverside meadow spiked with the little tents of happy people devoted to community camping, I walk more swiftly than is my wont till the caterwauling of their gramophones has grown faint behind me. If I read of a school at which the pupils are encouraged to engage in community verse-writing, I feel no passionate regret at having been born too soon to enjoy such privileges. Should a movement sweep over the country in favour of community drinking, I should be inclined to withdraw into solitude and sip water.

Nor am I alone in this dislike of community this-ing, that-ing, and the other-ing. I know a man whose face becomes the face of an assassin at the bare mention of the word 'community'. He spends half his time in community talking inside his own circle (but he does not know that

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it is community talking, because it has not been organized by a newspaper). From what he says I gather that it is his profound conviction that, outside his own circle, the forty million inhabitants of England, Scotland, and Wales ought to apply their energies not to coming together, but to avoiding each other. He would walk a mile to meet a crowd of his friends in order to talk to them about his passionate love of solitude and to denounce all these foul modern attempts to bring people together. He declares that England is now ruined because there is no longer any remote spot to which a man can retire in the certainty that his peace will not suddenly be invaded by a horde of lunatics in shorts singing 'Daisy Bell' out of tune.

Such a pitch of exaggeration did he lately reach in his denunciation of every kind of 'community' enjoyment, that, almost automatically, I began to consider the case for the other side. Or, rather, I began to consider whether, even from the point of view of anti-social doctrinaires like him and myself, the organization of 'community' pleasures ought not on the whole to be encouraged. I remembered that, in my own childhood, the invasion of my best-loved seaside town by nigger minstrels drawing fools into a circle was denounced by the conservative as a ruinous innovation. I remembered too, the bliss of

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being drawn into that circle and the pleasure I felt in looking at lovelier faces than I have ever seen since, while the seawind toyed with my straw hat and a tenor with blackened visage sang 'The Lost Chord' through his nose. Even to-day 'Genevieve' and 'Linger Longer, Lucy' and 'E Dunno Where He Are' call up to me, not the memory of their own banal contents, but the vision of a blue sea, and white rocks shining in the sun at the end of a mile of sand, and a crowd of faces incomparably beautiful. And this congregation of holiday-makers in one place had not only the advantage of producing a crowd with its mystical current of happiness: by drawing the crowd into one place, it left great stretches of headland, sand and rock solitary, so that, when one wished to be alone or to enjoy the happier solitude of two with a friend, there was half the world to roam in, as empty as a wilderness. From this I early came to the conclusion that crowds are the salvation of the lover of solitude. If there were no crowds, everywhere would be crowded for other people would have nowhere in particular to go. Persuade other people to come together regularly in a crowd in the same spot, however, and the problem of the solitary is solved. All the world, save the spot where the crowd is, is his. For this reason it is possible to find solitude, or something near it, even at Margate.

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Hence when I saw a photograph in a newspaper the other day showing what looked like thousands of hikers being led by a head hiker along a path through a Buckinghamshire cornfield, I resisted my first impulse to cry out upon such a desecration of the countryside. I could not myself enjoy the peace of a ripening cornfield in the company of so vast an *omnium gatherum* of my fellows. It is to escape from my fellows that I resort to cornfields whenever—which is seldom—I do resort to them. Still I said to myself: ‘How excellent a thing to gather all these people into one cornfield! How many other cornfields must in consequence be left solitary in their popped peace!’ I should even like to see the country re-mapped into districts open to hikers and districts forbidden to them, so that the lover of crowds might enjoy rural retreats in a crowd, while the lover of solitude could enjoy them in greater solitude than ever. This would be an advantage both to those who wished to accompany the hikers and to those who wished to avoid them. In this way community walking could be used to make the country safe for lovers of solitude.

Similarly, I hold that the man who hates crowds ought to rejoice when he hears the gramophones from the tents of community campers in a meadow. Suppose that these campers loved to camp alone; what meadow would be silent and what stretch of river-bank

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unpeopled? I have a friend whose misfortune it is to have taken a cottage near a field in which one of these roaring camps has lately established itself, and I sympathize with his indignation, since he hates everything modern, especially everything noisy, and, indeed, everything that is done by everybody outside the circle of his friends. I try to comfort him by pointing out that what is his loss is our gain, and that his raucous neighbours, by congregating in one place, are doing more to preserve the rural amenities of which he is continually talking than all the pamphleteers writing.

So firmly am I persuaded of the benefits that arise from doing things in the community fashion that I should like to see a movement for community motoring inaugurated. Even at present most motorists go to the same places, but too many articles have begun to appear in the Press, directing the motorist to parts of the country still known only to a few. The only way in which these unknown parts can be saved is to popularize the habit of community motoring, and to send all the motorists to certain fixed spots on Saturdays and Sundays. Brighton I am sure, could find room for twenty times as many cars as visit it at present. And there is not a beauty-spot in the South of England of which the same is not true.

All the Sunday motorists of London, I fancy, could be crowded into about half a dozen

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beauty-spots in which they would be all the happier because they were there in a crowd. Then the rest of us would have the lanes and the by-ways to ourselves, and would be able to drive about happily in what would be all but a pre-motor England. What I myself keep a motor-car for is to drive to places where a motor-car seems a desecration. If other people took to community motoring, the number of such places would increase.

If I myself do not engage in community pleasures, it is not from any sense of superiority to those who do. There are people who regard the community way of doing things as a modern newspaper stunt, but, in point of fact, it is as old almost as human nature. Scholars tell us that it was in community dancing and community singing that the Greek drama had its origin. Human beings did not wait for newspapers to tell them to sing and dance in crowds. Man is a social animal, and in my native city, when I was a boy, it was often only by the pressure of the police that people were kept from forming crowds in the street. I have heard a policeman say: 'Three's a crowd. Move on there,' when three of us were community talking under a lamp-post. I should not be surprised, indeed, if the historians were to discover that it was the police, and not the popular will, that put an end to community enjoyment in the modern world—to fairs and

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revels, for example, such as those once held at the ' White Horse ' at Westbury. If this is so, the community business is merely a return to nature. So long as it is not made compulsory it shall have my vote, like anything else that anybody objects to with undue vehemence.

XXV. The Militant Rambler ♪ ♪

AN idealist has written a letter to a morning paper, urging an intensification of the propaganda against litter on the eve of Bank Holidays. He also appeals to the B.B.C. to announce, as soon as a Bank Holiday is over, the names of the various places where paper and rubbish have been left by holiday-makers. 'This,' he believes, 'would probably "touch" the consciences of the guilty.'

This, I think, is one of the most attractive proposals that have been made in the course of the anti-litter campaign. It is attractive not because of the results it may be expected to produce, but because of the faith in human nature which it demonstrates. I would give a great deal to be able to believe that the ordinary litter-thrower is a man with a conscience so sensitive that he would blench on hearing it announced from his loud-speaker that the sandwich-wrapping which he had carelessly thrown away in a field near Neasden had been discovered. But I cannot believe it. Besides, there would be such a cornucopia of litter strewn in the most thickly frequented beauty-spots that the individual litter-thrower would feel that his own sin was scarcely noticeable in the

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composite sin of the multitude. Suppose, for example, that a man threw away the core of an apple on Box Hill on a Bank Holiday. Would he turn pale with a sense of guilt discovered when the B.B.C. announcer made it known the next day that a thousand and fifty-nine pieces of newspaper, four hundred and eighty-three squares of brown paper, six thousand seven hundred and five scraps of orange peel, nine empty mobiloil tins, an old boot, twelve beer bottles, twelve hundred and two chocolate wrappings, eighty-one chicken bones, three burst balloons, one apple-core, and seven hundred and nineteen empty cigarette packets were reported to have been discovered on and under Box Hill after the holiday? Would he not feel that his apple core was an inconspicuous trifle amid so monstrous a mass of rubbish? His indignation, it seems to me, would be directed against the other people who had destroyed the amenities of Box Hill with their mountains of litter, not against himself.

At the same time, if it were possible, it would be an excellent thing, after every Bank Holiday, to publish the statistics of litter-throwing and of its geographical distribution. The imagination of the public might be struck if it were announced that the paper and rubbish thrown away in Sussex alone in a single day would, if brought into the same place, form a heap two and a half times as large as Chanctonbury Hill.

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Unfortunately, if the B.B.C. attempted to publish a complete account of all the litter thrown away by the public on a Bank Holiday, another Bank Holiday would have come round long before the catalogue of the rubbish was complete. And how monotonous it would become. 'Under a chestnut-tree near Friday Street, a petrol tin was left behind by a motorist on Easter Sunday.' 'A sardine tin containing oil and the mutilated tail of a sardine was discovered in the Birdless Grove at Goodwood on Monday, the 4th of August.' Who could go on day after day listening to the tale of discarded rubbish? The B.B.C. almost drove us insane during the General Strike with announcements of the hours of departure of railway-trains. But I would rather listen to a B.B.C. announcer reading aloud a Bradshaw of railway-trains than a Bradshaw of rubbish.

Possibly, the scheme might be more effective if, instead of merely giving a description of the rubbish deposited, the name and address of the litter-thrower were made part of the announcement. I should myself feel uneasy if I heard the news being broadcast to the nation that I had been seen throwing the shell of a hard-boiled egg on to the grass of the river-bank near Shillingford Bridge. The B.B.C. would in such circumstances, have to be exceedingly careful to verify the names of the litter-throwers reported to it. It would never do to announce,

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without having made the most searching inquiries into the truth of the statement: 'A man was seen furtively throwing a paper-bag into a rhododendron-bush at Abinger Hammer. To the Boy Scout who demanded his name he admitted, under pressure, that he was Mr. John Galsworthy.' If this sort of thing were to happen the B.B.C. would soon be spending half its income in defending itself in libel actions. Yet, in order to shame the litter-thrower, we must name the litter-thrower. He has no conscience to which to appeal. If he had, he would not throw litter.

How far it is possible to preserve the amenities of the country, now that it has at last been discovered by the town, it is difficult to say. For the townsman likes to take with him into the country, not only the litter of the town, but the noise of the town, and to make the country resemble the town both to the eye and to the ear as far as this can be managed. The grass of the hillside is monotonously rural and so has to be made fit for urban frequentation by the aid of scattered newspapers and banana-skins. The songs of birds and the sound of running water are insufficiently varied, and become tolerable only when half-drowned in the music of gramophones and the choruses of London. It is only a few days since a girl in the country was asked by a policeman to desist from singing and was prosecuted for refusing

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to do so, and her defence makes it clear that a new type of townsman and townswoman has arrived, and is eager to create a new kind of countryside. She declared that 'every militant Rambler and lover of the country' would be on her side in demanding the right to sing. I forget whether it was in a country town or in the open country that she had the argument with the policeman, but at least she was on a rambling holiday, and, during a ramble, even the towns one visits are in the country. What filled me with alarm, as I read a report of the case, was her use of the word 'militant' to describe the new race of country-lovers. I have always regarded a country walk as one of the most pacific of pleasures. But this will be so no more if the young begin to walk militantly. Birds'-nesting, shooting, fishing—these are all more or less militant. Militant tactics may even be employed in flower-picking. But how is it possible to ramble militantly, unless this means simply making a noise?

There are two kinds of people who make a noise in the country—those who sing as if singing were the natural thing to do, and those who sing as if they were challenging the universe to stop them. In many parts of the country the inhabitants sing as naturally as the birds, and a crowd of Welshmen can sing in the country without turning it into an imitation of a street in a town. In London, on the other hand, we

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often hear the young singing largely in order to draw attention to themselves. They sing as if they had never heard a good song well sung in their lives, and as though the human throat were an instrument of the same order as the buzzer, the squeaker, and the mouth-organ. They may be heard in Camden Town on Saturday night, and I have heard them on the banks of the Thames near Maidenhead on Sunday. I do not know whether 'militant rambler' means a rambler who claims the right to do that sort of thing—but if it does I hope the propaganda against litter-throwing will be extended so as to embrace militant rambling. Halls might be provided by the municipalities in which militant ramblers could relieve their feelings by yelling before they set out on their rambles. To make a noise is good, and to exercise the lungs by making even the most hideous noises is good, but there is a place for everything. The motto of every true rambler, while in the country, should be: 'Less noise, please.' Otherwise, song, which is a gift of the gods, may have to be suppressed as a nuisance, like the jactation of walnut-shells in Hyde Park.

XXVI. How's Your Poor Feet?

EUROPE has lately been nearing a crisis in her fate, but in characteristically English fashion readers of *The Times* have chosen these days of anxiety to investigate the origin and authorship of the phrase, 'How's your poor feet?' The popular Press is often accused of levity in its attempt to attract the public, but here we have evidence that the most dignified and cultured body of newspaper-readers in the world is excitedly interested in a matter at least as frivolous as the revival of the bustle or the arrival of a film-star at Southampton. I am convinced that, if one went into the Athenaeum at lunch-time, one would hear the oldest and the gravest members exchanging reminiscences of occasions on which they heard the unforgettable phrase uttered. Who knows, indeed, whether, if the two Archbishops met, they would not forget Dr. Barnes for a time, while they related stories told by their fathers about the voice in the gallery that made the house rock with laughter by propounding the question to King Lear during the storm? Ecclesiastical affairs are engrossing enough, but, after all, was it Henry Irving or Benjamin Webster who was put off his balance by the

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man who shouted, ' How's your poor feet ? ' in the Adelphi Theatre ? *The Times*, I am sure, is obeying a wise instinct in airing such questions in its columns. This is the sort of thing in which classical scholars and City magnates are really interested. All their youth returns to them in a burst of sunshine as they try to remember the first occasion on which they heard ' Where did you get that hat ? ' A grey-haired scholar who can fix the date of the production of *Antigone* becomes even more absorbed in the task of fixing the date of ' Two Lovely Black Eyes '. If the various readings in Aeschylus delight him, why not the variant readings in ' And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back ' ? Is the one study so much more intellectual than the other ? What we know is that, while Aeschylus stirs the intellectual curiosity of the few, the old pantomime song stirs the intellectual curiosity both of the few and of the many.

One object of a newspaper, I take it, is to provide its readers with subjects for conversation, to discover what human beings like to talk about in their homes and in their clubs, in tea-shops and in public-houses, and to give these things prominence in the news. Politics, religion, morals, books, plays—it is clear that all these things interest and excite men and women. You could raise a heated argument in almost any company by mentioning Bishop Barnes,

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or the German collapse, or sterilization of the unfit, or the dole, or the censorship of literature. But we do not devote all our time to the discussion of such grave matters. In this climate, at any rate, we often forget world-politics to talk about the weather. We can do nothing about it, but it is a relief to curse it. Show me the man who is indifferent to the weather forecasts during his holidays, and I will show you a man who is unfit for human intercourse. I doubt whether there is one man in a hundred who, if he has a chance to tap a barometer in the morning, can, except by the exercise of will-power, refrain from tapping it. This being so, the weather is obviously news, and it seems to me that the Meteorological Office would do well to employ the most eminent prose writers in the country to compose its reports. Why should not a sunny day be ushered in with noble and hospitable phrases ?

Nor are clothes a subject of less interest than the weather. I myself seldom read about women's clothes except when they become a matter of controversy, like short skirts or the wearing of stockings at Wimbledon. But I will always read a paragraph about fashions in men's dress. Are spats still worn ? Is the wing-collar the correct thing with morning dress ? I am more interested in these things than in the initiation ceremonies of the Kanga-Banga. They are the most civilized branch of

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anthropology. Nor do I see how it can be more frivolous to study the ties of to-day than the costumes worn at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. Yet if one wrote well about Elizabethan costumes, one would be reputed to be a learned man, whereas if one made the correct attire for a man to-day one's chief study, one would be looked on as little better than a fribble. For some reason or other the fewer the people who are interested in a subject, the more intellectual its study is supposed to be. That is why, in learned circles, Sanskrit is more highly revered than horse-racing.

I do not wish to disparage Sanskrit. I, too, hold it in mystical reverence. I am even of the opinion that Sanskrit, like every other subject, could be made interesting to ordinary men. But the mind cannot always be on the strain. It hungers at times for an admixture of trifles—for news of curious and ridiculous events. Isaac Disraeli provided it with food of the kind in *Curiosities of Literature*. But the scope of the book was small, being confined to books and bookmen. We wish also to hear about the curiosities of contemporary life. In regard to this matter, again, we are faced by a strange paradox. To be interested in the curiosities of any other age but our own is generally regarded as an intellectual pursuit. To be interested in the curious occurrences of our own time is considered to be no more than a pastime and a

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waste of one's brains, if one possesses any. A Greek charioteer is meat for great minds, but 'Jockey Weds Giantess' is somehow brain-sapping. I do not agree with this anti-modern bias. What happened yesterday is as interesting to the mind as what happened in 800 B.C. and, indeed, is doubly interesting because it happened yesterday. It is because I believe in the essential and widespread appeal of contemporary oddities that I was delighted to see on the chief news page of a recent number of *The Times* a report headed :

MOUSE IN A SAUSAGE ANOTHER BLACKMAILING RUSE

After taking a cursory glance at the latest news of the Conference of Ministers, I turned eagerly to 'Mouse in a Sausage' and read every word of it. It is not that I am so deeply interested in mice in sausages as in the Conference of Ministers. But I had read about the Conference of Ministers over and over again, and I had never heard of a mouse in a sausage before. Also it was a fascinating and moving story—a story, as those who read it know, of a mother's love. She was a woman whose son had been dismissed from the food department of a Cologne stores. How could she get him reinstated? She knew a way. She went to the stores, produced a baked liver sausage, containing a dead mouse, and declared that she

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had bought it at the stores. She hinted, however, that she would not give the matter publicity if her son were restored to the position he had lost. Unfortunately for her, a veterinary authority to whom the sausage was taken reasoned that a mouse could not have passed through the mincing machine and remained whole, and that, if it had entered the skin of the sausage at a later period, it would have been baked all over and not merely, as it was, on one side. Apart from this, it was not a mouse of the kind that frequents stores, but a tame white mouse such as is kept as a child's pet. As a result of this expert evidence, the honest woman was sentenced to four months' imprisonment. That, surely, is a story as well worth reading as most psychological novels. Equally interesting was that other German story of the carrier-pigeon that was left in a box at a rich woman's door with a written message ordering her to attach a sum of paper money to the bird's leg and then let bird and money fly through the air to the unknown blackmailer's home, with the threat that if she did not do so her house would be burnt down. The week, indeed, has been rich in astonishing events—'Baker Street Flat Scenes', '“Boy Wizard” of Wall Street', 'Jack Diamond's Escape', 'Rum Runner's Poison Gas', 'Burglary as Relief from Boredom', 'Gallant Rescue of Dog', 'A Thousand Children Hoaxed', and 'He Shattered the

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Death Curse Legend '. None of these, perhaps, is quite equal to 'Mouse in a Sausage '. But they are all good and provide convincing evidence that we are living in a world in which curious occurrences are as frequent as in the world of which Herodotus wrote. Let *The Times* enlarge its 'Mouse in a Sausage ' and 'How's Your Poor Feet ' activities. It will find this by far the surest method of increasing its circulation among the members of the Athenaeum Club.

XXVII. The Map ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

TWO things are essential to a restful holiday. The first is not to possess a map. The second is not to possess a car. To go anywhere with both a map and a car is to invoke the spirit of unrest and to become the slave of the place where one is not—no longer an idler but an unpaid chauffeur plying along unknown roads till the fall of evening.

I should have been perfectly happy at Oban if I had not bought a map, and, even after I had bought a map, I should still have been reasonably happy if I had not had a car. On the back of the menu at the hotel at which I stayed Oban is described as 'the Charing Cross of the Western Highlands', and even this enthusiastic phrase falls short of doing justice to the beauty of the place. A blue bay and the land rising steeply around it, a medley of mainland that looks like island and of island that looks like mainland, inlets of the sea bordered with golden seaweed at low tide all along the coast, the heights of Mull appearing huge and unsubstantial in the quiet of evening, a little golf-course where it is possible to play badly almost in secret towards the end of September, good weather, oystercatchers whistling along the shore—what more is

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needed to induce a man to settle down in peace as one who has reached the end of his journey ? ' This,' I said, looking round me at the fourth tee, ' is the most beautiful country I have seen.' I had said it of other places, but never with profounder conviction. The ball sang into the air and by a rare and curious accident fell on the not distant green. ' This,' I said to myself, ' is Paradise.'

Desiring to learn something of so richly beautiful a country, I returned to the town, entered a shop, and bought a map. I knew when my eye caught the island of Skye that peace for me was over. Just to set foot on that little corner of the island nearest the mainland would be enough. It was only about a hundred and twenty miles away by road—an easy afternoon's journey. We should return to Oban almost immediately, but to have come so far and not to go on as far as Skye was impossible. I fetched the car round, and within a few minutes we were crossing the metal bridge at Conall Ferry with hearts so excited that we scarcely grudged the ten-shillings toll that we had to pay at the farther end.

It must be admitted that the scene at every turn on the northern journey is intoxicating. It must also be admitted that the farther you advance the more unspeakable the roads become. To drive along them at more than twenty miles an hour is like sitting in one of

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those infernal machines in which one paid for being shaken to a jelly at Wembley. They are scarcely roads at all, but sadistic devices for turning a motor-car into a bucking broncho. Still, when we arrived at Ballachulish, the tide was flowing out of the loch in the colours of a peacock, and the whole world seemed perfect except the uninviting little ferry-boat on which we had to cross in the car. Gingerly I drove the car down the sloping jetty and swung its nose round so as not to miss the ramshackle-looking planks up which we had to climb aboard. It was my first experience of this kind of ferry, and I reflected that I should not like to bring a car down those slippery stones on a wet day. Then, at the end of the crossing, down the planks again and up the steep stones on the other side, and off along a road which ultimately became a kind of strip of bombed battle-field which should have been marked as passable only for tanks. The men who are now at work on it have made it temporarily even less of a road than it must originally have been. We moved slowly from red flag to red flag, now bumping through mud, now crawling over sharp-pointed boulders, through scenery that my companion declared was magnificent but at which I had no time to look. Being unable to get farther we spent the night at Invergarry, with its water-ousels and its crossbills along the borders of its wooded torrent. Then, next morning, over the

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mountains along roads compared to which the earlier roads were masterpieces of human efficiency. Even at a pace of fifteen miles an hour the car rattled and shook as though something were tormenting her and she were attempting to get rid of all her screws in order to secure relief. I had seen pot-holes before, but here there was little else but pot-holes till we reached Dornie Ferry and once more crawled down a jetty and up on to the barge that conveyed us to the other side. Then a few more miles to Kyle of Lochalsh, and another ferry across the half-mile of water to Skye, and off along a better road than we had seen since we left Fort William.

Scarcely had we landed in Skye when a gloomy blast of wind descended from the mountains. The evening, however, was extraordinarily beautiful, and the peaks on the mainland stood up in the last light of the day like islands in a dream. We had intended to go as far as Sligeachan, but the little whirlpools of wind that came down from the gaps in the mountains suggested that a storm was coming, and we were content to spend the night above Broadford pier, amid the entrancement of hills seen beyond the sea. I had been told when crossing of a week of rough weather in which it was impossible to work the ferry, and if a storm was brewing I had no wish to spend a week under drenching rains on Skye. And a storm was brewing. It

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began to howl before I was asleep. The blinds rattled, the floods poured down, and Oban, more than a hundred miles away, seemed like a wilfully deserted Eden among my melancholy forebodings. It was no better when we reached the ferry for our return journey the next morning. The wind was raging and the rain falling and the waves rising. The ferrymen were wearing oilskins and sou'-westers. The ferry looked but a frail craft to face a rising storm, and the stones of the inclined plane of the jetty, overgrown with seaweed towards the bottom, looked infinitely slippery. I went into a small shop to buy cigarettes and, in order keep up my spirits, said to the girl at the counter: 'It doesn't seem so rough after all.' 'No,' she said, 'it's just nasty and horrid.' In case we should be swept out to sea, I decided that it would be well to provision ourselves before starting, and, after a tour of the shops, returned with two packets of biscuits (4*d.*), one slab of chocolate (1*s.*), four packets of cigarettes (4*s.*), and a half-bottle of whisky (6*s.* 6*d.*). Then to the wheel, and down the slippery-looking jetty and off across the half-mile of water. The mainland now seemed very much farther away than it had seemed on the previous evening. And, as I sat at the wheel of the car on the swivel-deck of a ferry-boat that seemed scarcely larger than the car, and gazed with apprehensive eyes across the tossing waters,

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the Scottish coast seemed to take an extraordinarily long time to come any nearer. Still, to be back on the mainland was worth the journey, and the very pot-holes on the roads had the appearance of familiar friends. After leaving Kyle of Lochalsh, however, I tried to avoid a worse pot-hole than usual, drove along the edge of the road, which was a mere slither of mud, and, before I knew what had happened, the car had skidded into a deep ditch, heeled over, and hit a stone wall a terrific thump which sent the broken glass of the windscreen splintering into the car. 'That,' said I angrily, 'is the threepenny bits,' for my companion had told me that threepenny bits are unlucky, and our pockets were full of threepenny bits that we had been given in change since our arrival in Scotland. The car, having struck the wall, then partly righted herself on one wheel in the ditch, and with the help of bottom gear and many groanings she at last struggled back to the road with a jerk. As we knew of no garage where the car could be examined and the injuries repaired, there was nothing to be done except to go ahead. With the feeling that the brakes might have been damaged or that a wheel might come off at any moment, we pursued our way dismally enough back across the water and over the mountains from Kyle of Lochalsh to Invergarry. The wind blew upon us as if with particular spite at our escape. As we rounded

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the shoulder of a gloomy mountain under a gloomy sky, it moaned and whined about us like a tormented and malignant spirit. No other human being, no other car we met on those barren heights, or till we arrived back at Invergarry drenched with the water that had poured through the windscreen.

It was on the next day, however, that the real floods fell. The storm had swollen to a gale, and the water came down in cold avalanches. To sit at the wheel was like being a helmsman on a wild night at sea. Through the broken windscreen the tempest of rain swept in, poured itself up one's sleeves, drenched one to the backbone, and before long one was sitting in a pool of water. White waterfalls were gushing down the mountain-sides. Here and there along the road one had to drive through lakes of water that leaped over the bonnet of the car like waves over the bow of a boat, and blew into one's lap. I thought enviously of Dr. Johnson travelling in Scotland in the comparative comfort of the eighteenth century.

When we reached the hotel on the north side of Ballachulish ferry we went in and changed our water-weighted clothes while waiting for lunch. On the previous day, we learned, the ferry, when bringing over a car from the south side, had made three attempts to land, and in the end had been driven back to the jetty from which it had started. The wind in the telephone

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wires, screaming and yammering, suggested possibilities of that kind of thing. It needed all one's strength to shut the hotel door against its fury. The swollen rivers pouring into the loch, too, had set up a strong current that, as it met the tide, tossed and whirled in the wind. There were moments at which I thought of settling in the hotel for the night, but other cars were crossing, and Oban was a magnet. Once more, then, out into the raging tempest, our torn hood flying and flapping, with a sound like bursting tyres, then down the steep jetty, up the rickety boards on to the wet deck of the ferry-boat and off to sea. We hugged the shore for some way, and then struggled slowly across the swirling waters; then hugged the shore on the other side, feeling as though we might be swept out to sea at any moment or be beaten on to the rocks by the gale, and with no sense of certainty till the ropes were at last out and the barge bound to the jetty. Now that it is all over let me bear witness to the wonderful steadiness of these ferries in foul weather. But somehow, as one sits at the wheel of a car penned on the deck of a small flat boat that crawls out at the pace of a lame duck into the raging wind and across the raging waters, one's predominant feeling is not one of confidence. At least, mine wasn't.

And so on, with the billows of the rain soaking us, and the storm rushing at us, and our hearts

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happy in the knowledge that, if a wheel did not come off the car, we should be dining in Oban, and that we should be able to get a new windscreen.

The next morning I went out after breakfast and spent all the threepenny bits—there were more than a dozen—that I had in my pockets. Then, on returning to the hotel, I opened the map and looked at Skye and the far north of Scotland and felt a strange longing to go back—some day—and see some of the things I had missed.

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